



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

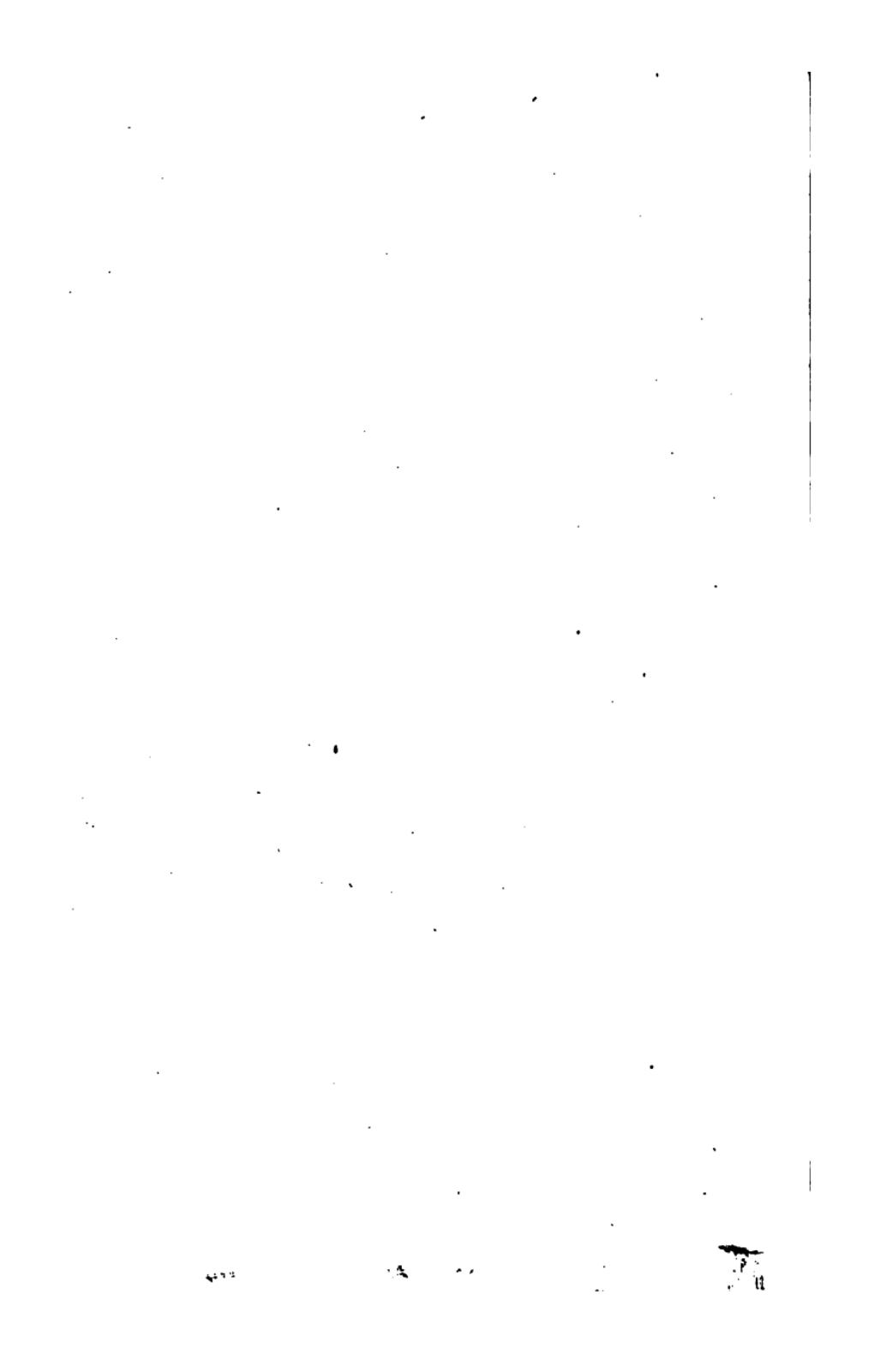




600097476\$







BY THE SAME AUTHOR

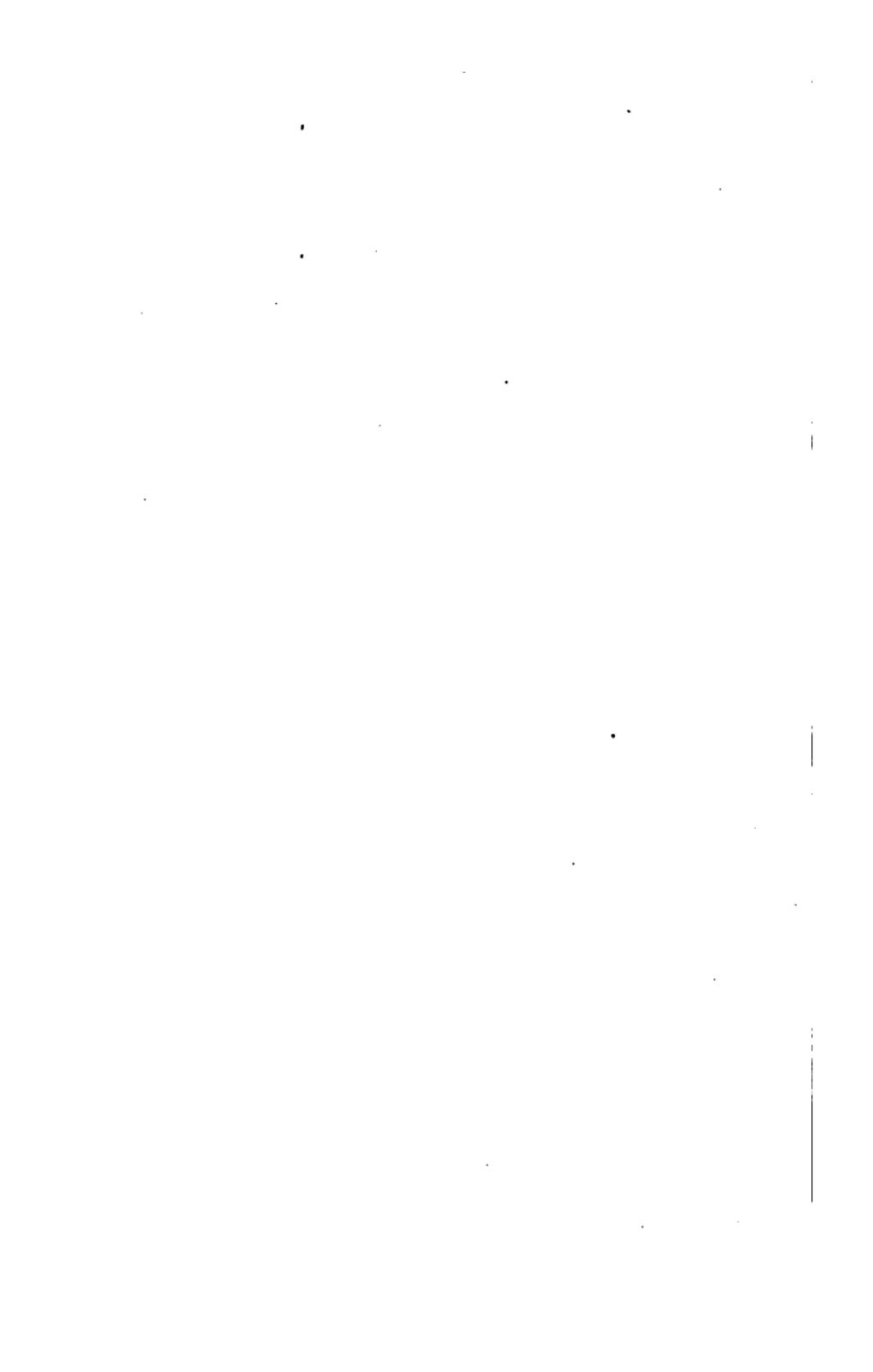
Uniform in size and binding, price 2s. 6d.

Quiet Moments

*A FOUR WEEKS' COURSE OF THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS
BEFORE EVENING PRAYER AND AT SUNSET*

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge



MORNING NOTES OF PRAISE

RIVINGTONS

London	Waterloo Place
Oxford	High Street
Cambridge	Trinity Street

MORNING NOTES OF PRAISE

A Series of Meditations upon the Morning
Psalms

*DEDICATED TO THE COUNTESS OF
COTTERNHAM*

By LADY CHARLOTTE-MARIA PEPYS

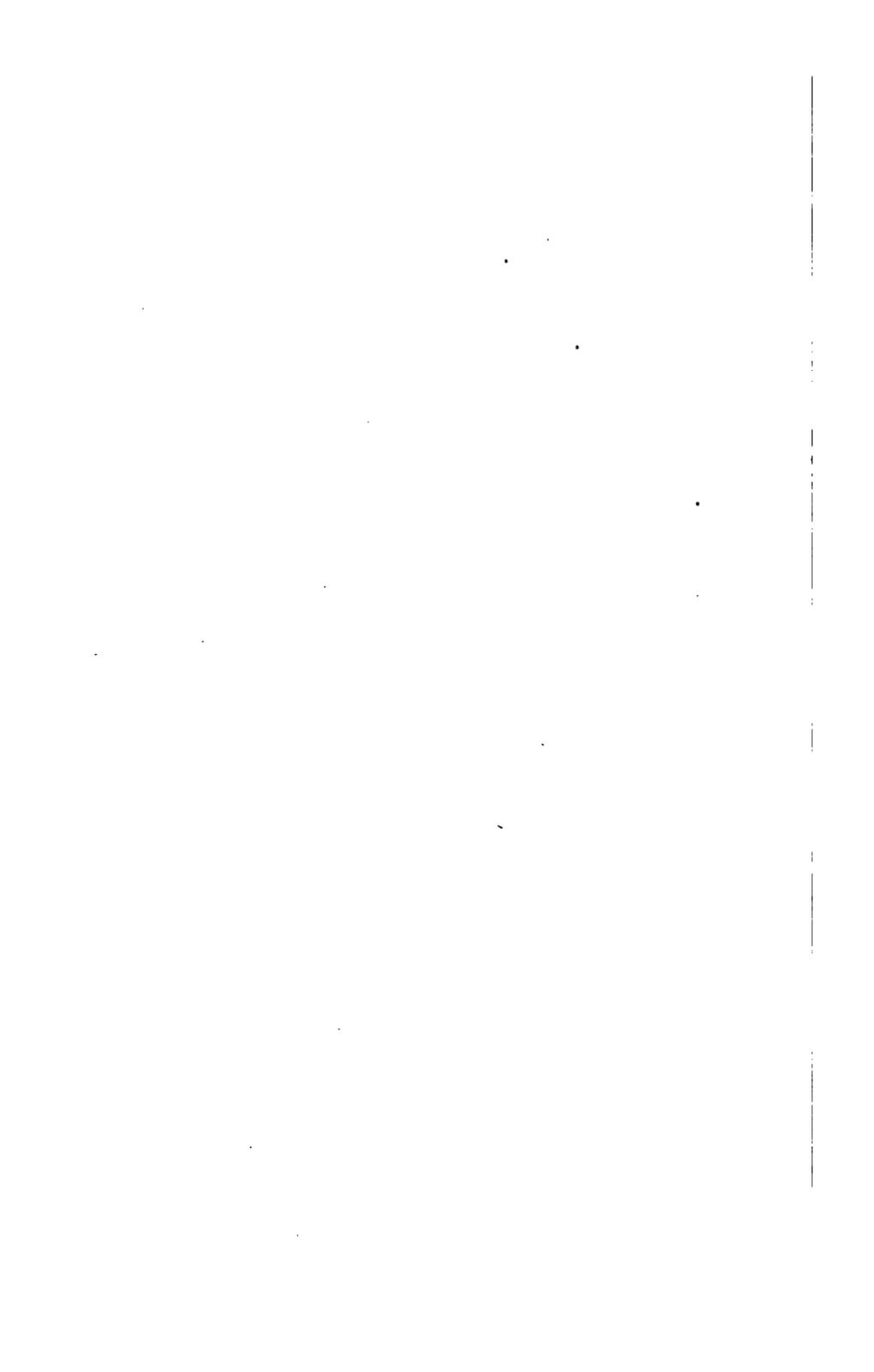
NEW EDITION



RIVINGTONS
London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1875

138 . i . 325



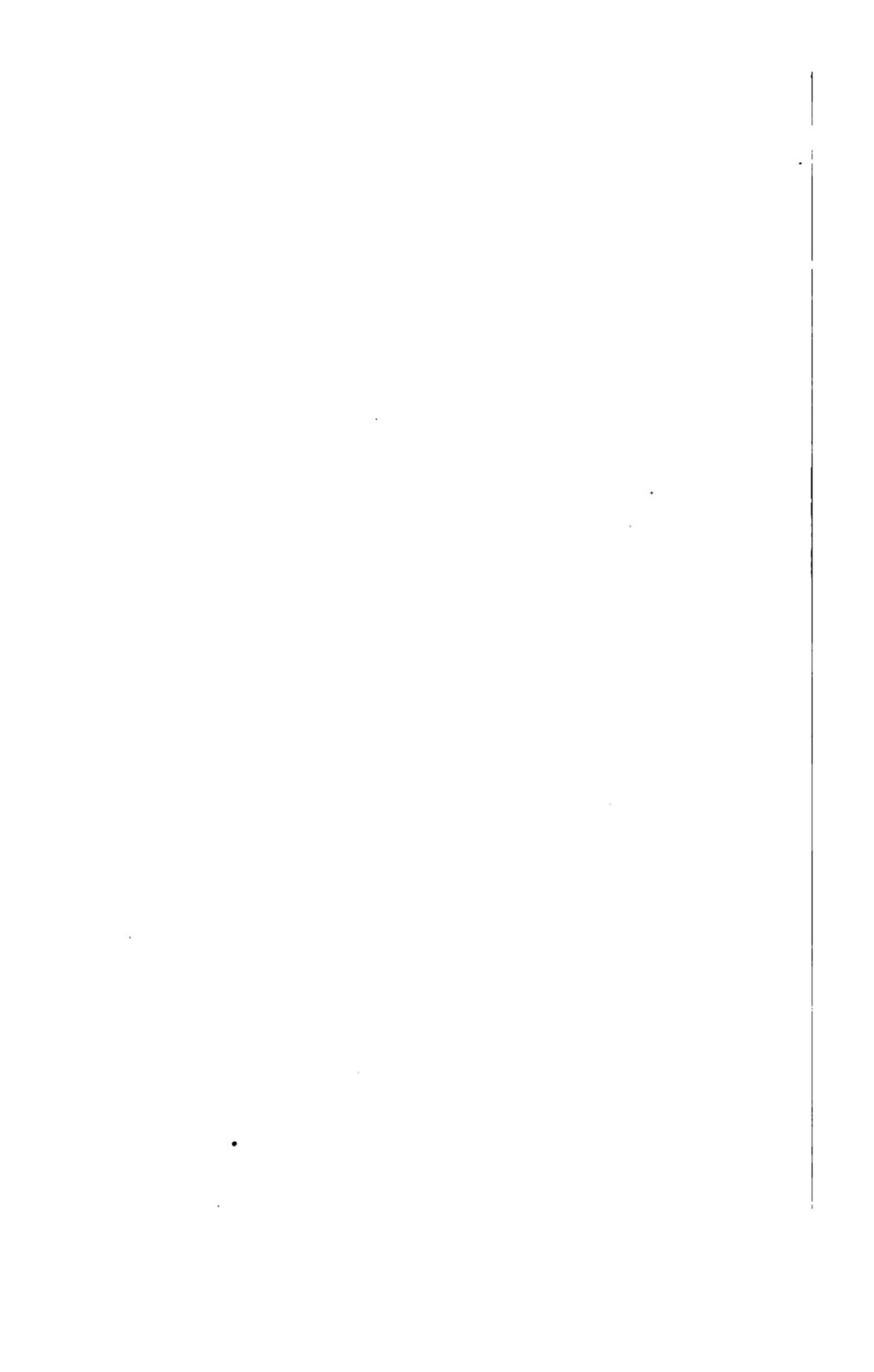
TO

The Countess of Cottenham

WILL THE DEAR MOTHER, WHOSE APPROVAL OF
“QUIET MOMENTS” HAS BEEN MOST PRECIOUS TO
THE AUTHOR, ALLOW THE COMPANION VOLUME,
“MORNING NOTES,” TO BE INSCRIBED WITH HER
BELOVED NAME, AND DEDICATED TO HER BY HER
DUTIFUL AND LOVING DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHOR?

CREUZNACH, Nov. 2, 1853.



Preface

IN the following series of Meditations from the Psalms for Morning Service they are treated simply as devotional exercises ; much research therefore, or elucidation, will not be expected. We possess the admirable Commentaries of Bishop Horne upon the whole Psalter, and many upon single Psalms by men of eminent learning, and women of distinguished attainments, but none have produced from these glorious materials a book of devotions for the use of young people. Yet there are really no devotional exercises to be compared to the very Psalms themselves, and it is simply to point out this fact clearly to those who habitually read the Psalms without remarking it, that this little Book aspires.

There is always a danger of neglecting advantages which we seem to possess by nature as it were, and enjoy almost mechanically from our childhood, and thus even the words of the sweet Singer are not always as well known nor loved as they should be by those who read them daily.

That this little Book may arrest the attention of many of my young friends, and make them see their rich possession in the Psalms, is the prayer of their affectionate friend,

CHARLOTTE-MARIA PEPYS.

CREUZNACH, *Nov. 2, 1853.*

Contents

DAY I.—DECISION.

- | | PAGE |
|---|------|
| " But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish."—PSALM i. 7 | 1 |

DAY II.—OMNIPRESENCE.

- | | |
|--|---|
| " The ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts."—PSALM x. 4 | 3 |
|--|---|

DAY III.—TRUTH, CANDOUR.

- | | |
|---|---|
| " Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?"—PSALM xv. 1 | 6 |
|---|---|

DAY IV.—GOD IN NATURE.

- | | |
|---|---|
| " The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth His handywork."—PSALM xix. 1 | 9 |
|---|---|

DAY V.—WALKING WITH GOD.

- | | |
|---|----|
| " Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me, for Thou art the God of my salvation."—PSALM xxv. 4 | 11 |
|---|----|

DAY VI.—STRIFE.

- | | |
|---|--|
| " Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men ; Thou shalt keep them | |
|---|--|

	PAGE
secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues." —PSALM xxxi. 22	13

DAY VII.—REJOICING IN EVIL.

"There, there, so would we have it."—PSALM xxxv. 25	16
---	----

DAY VIII.—BESETTING SINS.

"And I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight."—PSALM xxxviii. 17	19
--	----

DAY IX.—TRUST.

"God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble."—PSALM xlvi. 1	22
--	----

DAY X.—FROWARDNESS.

"Whereas thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast My words behind thee."—PSALM l. 17	25
--	----

DAY XI.—SPEECH.

"Awake up, my glory ; awake, lute and harp : I myself will awake right early."—PSALM lxvii. 9	28
--	----

DAY XII.—YOUTH.

"O God, Thou art my God ; early will I seek Thee."— PSALM lxiii. 1	31
---	----

DAY XIII.—FAMILY PRAYER.

"He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house."—PSALM lxviii. 6	35
---	----

DAY XIV.—GRATITUDE.

- | | PAGE |
|--|------|
| “ My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee, and so will
my soul whom Thou hast delivered.”—PSALM lxxi. 21 | 38 |

DAY XV.—AFFLICITION.

- | | |
|---|----|
| “ When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God: when
my heart is vexed, I will complain.”—PSALM lxxvii. 3 | 41 |
|---|----|

DAY XVI.—CHURCHMANSHIP.

- | | |
|--|----|
| “ Turn Thee again, Thou God of Hosts, look down from
heaven; behold, and visit this vine.”—PSALM lxxx. 14 | 45 |
|--|----|

DAY XVII.—DEVOTEDNESS.

- | | |
|--|----|
| “ O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name.”
—PSALM lxxxvi. 11 | 49 |
|--|----|

DAY XVIII.—LIFE AND DEATH.

- | | |
|--|----|
| “ The days of our age are threescore years and ten; and
though men be so strong that they come to fourscore
years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow;
so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.”—PSALM
xc. 10 | 51 |
|--|----|

DAY XIX.—PRAISE.

- | | |
|--|----|
| “ O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice
in the strength of our salvation.”—PSALM xcv. 1. | 55 |
|--|----|

DAY XX.—PRAYER.

- | | |
|---|----|
| “ Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto
Thee.”—PSALM cii. 1. | 59 |
|---|----|

DAY XXI.—LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

"He spread out a cloud to be a covering."—PSALM cv. 38 63

DAY XXII.—DESIRE.

"He satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."—PSALM cvii. 9 66

DAY XXIII.—OBEDIENCE.

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His dwelling so high, and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?"—PSALM cxiii. 5 69

DAY XXIV.—CAPRICE, VANITY.

"It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man."—PSALM cxviii. 8 73

DAY XXV.—CONTENTMENT.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord : I have promised to keep Thy law."—PSALM cxix. 57 78

DAY XXVI.—MENTAL CULTIVATION.

"Make Thou Thy servant to delight in that which is good, that the proud do me no wrong."—PSALM cxix. 122 81

DAY XXVII.—CONSTANT PRAYER.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."—PSALM cxi. 1 85

DAY XXVIII.—MAMMON WORSHIP.

"As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold, the work of men's hands."—PSALM cxxxv. 15 87

DAY XXIX.—PERSONAL GIFTS.

- "I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."—**PSALM cxxxix. 13 90**

DAY XXX.—SPIRITUAL LIFE.

- "The Lord looseth men out of prison: the Lord giveth sight to the blind."—**PSALM cxlvii. 7 95**

DAY XXXI.—UNIVERSAL GLORY.

- "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."—
PSALM cl. 6 99
-

- NOONDAY MEDITATIONS 106**

Prayer

UPON COMMENCING THIS WORK

O THOU to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, be with me, and bless this effort of mine to lead Thy children to love and value the precious treasure which Thou hast granted to us in the prayers, and hymns, and spiritual songs of Thy servant David, and to glorify Thee, O God, for this and every other help which Thou givest us on our way to Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATIONS.

DAY I.

"But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and
the way of the ungodly shall perish."—PSALM i. 7.

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with
reverence."—PSALM ii. 11.

MEDITATION.

THE Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and since He will cause the way of the ungodly to perish, He must know that also. To Him indeed the way of every man's heart is open—He not only knows whether I am in the broad or the narrow road, He knows if I still flatter myself I have not decided which to love,—Him and Life, or Sin and Death. He knows all the little personal peculiarities which are perhaps known and borne with at home as my "ways," but which are really indications of character and temper in which I ought not to indulge as if they were of no account. If we could but divest ourselves of the habit of looking at our lives with all the excusing and explanatory notes we are apt to make ourselves and expect others to make, we should arrive at a much clearer idea of that real standard of positive holiness by which we shall be judged. Let me now then cast

away all such apologies for deviations from the right rule of conduct as the following, and in judging myself by the Word of God, make no deductions to its requirements, under these heads :

1. "Not necessary in these days."
2. "Impossible under my circumstances."
3. "Would be misunderstood."
4. "Would be considered as weakness or stupidity."
5. "Might look like profession."
 1. "Holiness" in the age of St. Paul meant the same for God's servants in those days as in these days.
 2. The "circumstances" and the command are given by the same God.
 3. He can make others understand as well as myself what my motives are, or can make even misunderstandings work for good.
 4. If He considers my ways and approve, they cannot be proofs of weakness or stupidity.
 5. It looked very like profession when I was baptized—it looked very much like profession when I was confirmed—it will look very like profession if I am ever married—like the profession of a grateful and loving Faith in the Blessed Trinity. But if I fear to liye as having made this profession, how shall it be with me when I come to die?

Is mine then now (without these deductions) the way of the righteous, or the way of the ungodly? This latter term does not mean, of course, those only who deny the existence of God, the Divinity of our Saviour or of the Holy Spirit, but all without exception who live without reference to God's Holy Will, and without love for Him in their hearts. If such has hitherto been my case, speak to me, O gracious Lord, while I commune with mine own heart and in my

chamber, teach me to be Thine in heart and soul—in daily duties, in daily pleasures, worshipping Thee, and setting Thee ever before mine eyes, and “being still,” that is, resigned to Thy Will, whatsoever that Will may be concerning me. Amen. Amen.

DAY II.

“The ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts.”—PSALM x. 4.

“He hath said in his heart, Cush, I shall never be cast down: there shall no harm happen unto me.”—PSALM x. 6.

“He hath said in his heart, Cush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it.”
—PSALM x. 12.

MEDITATION.

LET me consider the kind of person who is described as saying “there shall no harm happen unto me”—and “God hath forgotten, He hideth away His face, He will never see it.” Who says this? The ungodly, he who “is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts.” What great truths does he forget? That God sees every thing, and that we are not safe for a single moment without His care and love. Such is the description here given of the ungodly—does it agree with our popular idea of the ungodly? No, we consider the Infidel and the Atheist, the deniers of God’s existence, and all who question the Divinity of our Saviour and of the Holy Ghost, and the co-equality of the blessed Trinity, as ungodly; in short, the unbeliever

and the misbeliever, nor do we deny the title to the flagrant sinner and the utterly careless. But is there here no word for me? Does not the portrait given here of the ungodly bring it very near the semblance of a heart carefully taught and trained perhaps in all true religion and virtue, yet not really filled with the love of God? Is it never true of me that a day of business or of pleasure passes over me, and God is not in all my thoughts? Is this never occasioned by fluttering pride and self-conceit? Is it never caused by rebellious pride that hates to confess unto Him sins committed, or to own faults of temper and others unto those persons who have suffered from them?

Is it never true of me likewise that I put away grave and sad thoughts of what shall be the end of life? how am I preparing for it? how surely *must* it come, how suddenly *may* it come? and how weak and comfortless will all earthly enjoyment then be? that I put away these warnings by turning to my enjoyments? saying to my soul, "Peace, peace," "I shall never be cast down: there shall no harm happen unto *me*?" And when gay spirits tempt me to levity or curiosity, or aught else tempts me to be dishonourable, or temper hot and hasty tempts me to be disobedient, wrathful, unforgiving,—do I never say to myself, "Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it"?

Oh, how many persons are there who when it is suggested to them that such or such a practice is sinful, answer according to this spirit and say, I never found it do *any harm!* I never saw any *evil consequences* arise from it. No, because God *doth* see it, and reserveth until a later day the opening of our eyes to comprehend that He doth see, even when He

holdeth His peace and doth not immediately punish. We are warned again and again that we are not to judge our sins by their visible consequences in this world ; yet we are one and all prone to do so, and to act as though we ~~really~~ thought God did not see what He doth not punish visibly. From how many sins then should we be saved, if we felt His Presence more and more about us ! From how many vexations should we be saved, if we recollect that He sees the right meaning of every word or action misinterpreted by our fellow-man—that He is aware of the clever but cutting answer meekly suppressed for His sake—that He sees the secret pain the taunt has inflicted, as surely as He knows every temptation—sees the bold sinner yield to it, as he thinks safely, unseen of man—and sees the gentle heart look to Him for help and resist it, unseen of man also ! He is indeed ever near us. He knows in whose thoughts every thrill of pleasure is one of thanksgiving also. He knows who attribute the kindness of earthly friends to His Divine love,—and who consider it as a tribute to their own worth and character. He knows every deep silent sigh that one heart breathes before His Cross in shame and sorrow for sin. He sees the well-concealed movement of vanity, or pride more subtle still, that exists beneath apparent shyness or reserve or even timidity in another. From Him no secrets are hid. If this thought be awful, it is so *true* that we dare not try to pass it by. On the contrary, let it be our joy and protection—let us be as thankful for this Holy Presence here, as we shall be when we see Him face to face in Heaven. Oh, may I so live this day, rejoicing in the thought that Thou art near me, O Lord my God ! grant me Thy grace that I may fall neither into fear nor into forgetfulness of Thy

Holy Presence, but may seek to serve and please Thee in all my ways, and those whom Thou hast given me, for Thy sake. Amen. Amen.

DAY III.

“Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?

“Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.”—PSALM xv. 1, 2.

MEDITATION.

HOW great, how very great an honour is here put upon “the lip of truth!” The man chosen of the Lord is said to be “he who leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.” Three several points are mentioned,—the first is purity—the next, action—the third, speech. In the midst of a fallen world it is so very much easier to learn evil than good—to acquire habits of idle trifling than of energy and diligence—to be careless rather than to rule the tongue—to follow others than to think over their ways and choose whether we will follow them or not, that the duty of keeping ourselves in an “uncorrupted life,” “unspotted from the world,” is often insisted upon in Scripture. And a very little self-examination will enable us to discover how easily we let inclination, or love of ease, or fashion make us adopt habits of self-indulgence—of luxury—of vain display—of inordinate anxiety about trifling things—of spending our time, strength, and money in ways that we would not choose, if choose we did at all.

But this is what many of us do not take the trouble to do ; and those who *do* take the trouble are very apt to begin at the wrong end, and set up to choose for themselves in matters where they ought not, instead of submitting to lawful authorities. However, there are some matters in which we all, even the youngest, are left to choose our own ways—to decide for ourselves whether little vexations and disappointments shall make us forget our self-command or not—whether temptations shall make us forget God or not—and whether self-indulgence or indolence shall make us leave undone every day what we meant to do, and do that which we meant not to do.

But there are some people who fear the displeasure of their fellow-creatures so very much, that it is hardly true perhaps of such persons that they exercise any choice in many matters. Their one aim is to avoid blame ; they will give up their right, their opinion, their everything, in short, to avoid censure or ridicule, or even an inquiring look from some persons, while with others we shall find them bold, positive, overbearing, and very selfish. It is obvious that such self-abnegation has no real good in it, and proceeds merely from a slavish spirit. If the fear of God restrained every assertion of opinion in one room or company, it would do so in another. The timidity that is real and natural may indeed disappear in the society of the gentle or the familiar, but if it is genuine it is not replaced by a bold disregard of courtesy anywhere. Such characters as these are *cowardly*, and therefore easily led, especially to evil ; but they are also so very *vain* that they cannot bear to be thought submissive, and therefore assert themselves, as it were, with needless energy when they are with those who are younger, gentler, or more

moderate than themselves. It is certainly not from such dispositions that anything of gentle firmness is to be expected, and it is gentle firmness alone that can well and thoroughly resist temptation to do wrong because others do—without giving offence and without self-exaltation.

Let me then consider if I have hitherto been quite satisfied with myself—if I have acted up to a true standard of right and wrong *only* when I was not afraid of displeasing others, or of exerting myself? How often have I read the words of this Psalm without suspecting myself to be other than the character herein described? Yet if worldly slavish fear—if self-indulgence—if indifference—are allowed to alter my conduct,—and my opinions waver with every varying phase of interests or companionship,—can I consider mine to be the lip of truth, even if I never positively violate it openly? Can I consider my life as an uncorrupt life, unspotted from the world, if my *inclinations* form my rule of action, and if I dwell fondly upon low and worldly pleasures, neglecting for them even duty, even perhaps sacred duties?

Teach me, O Lord my God, to worship Thee in sincerity and truth ; teach me to perceive and know what things I ought to do, and also strictly and faithfully to perform the same, resisting the influence of worldly motives and of natural frailty, and giving myself, by Thy help and grace, again daily unto Thee. Keep me unspotted from the world, Thou who canst rule my wayward heart and make it Thine, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

DAY IV.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork."—PSALM xix. 1.

MEDITATION.

MAGNIFICENT! magnificent! this is all we can say when we look upon the heavens, bright with floods of sunshine, frowning in storm, blushing into dawn, glowing at sunset, swept by white wind-clouds, or arrayed in night's unfathomable blue, serene with moonlight, or brilliant with stars ; beautiful, intensely beautiful, still varying every hour, varying with every climate, every latitude, from the Equator to the Poles, there is no wonder that is so wondrous as the firmament over our heads.

Thus is it to the ordinary observer, to the little child, to the most bounded or untaught intellect: What must it be to those who daily study it in their rapt meditations, who can weigh and compare the probabilities of its laws, the nature of the bright bodies that adorn it, and can encounter the whole field of eager and philosophical inquiry which it suggests ? Happy are they, happy are we, if to them and to us "the heavens" ever "declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork." Happy are all who look upon the glorious scene in the same spirit that a little child of two years old did, who, being ill and restless, was held up to the window, one beautiful winter's night, to look at the stars : "God made all those," said he, thoughtfully, "and He can make me well." The chain of thought from Creative Power to Loving Care was per-

fect in his infant mind ; may it be so with ours. May we ever find in God's works evidences of His love as well as of His power ; they are there, it only needs that we seek them.

There is, moreover, much to be learned by considering the works of Nature—by her God's command—in the light of types ; a light in which we are again and again taught to regard them, both in the Old and New Testament. And there is yet a third light in which to view them, namely, as instructors, by their nature and habits enforcing the most beautiful lessons.

In the next verse, “One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another,” we are reminded of the parts in a choral service, answering each to each, and then finally swelling the hymns of praise united ; like a very confluence of sounds, distinct in their several streams, yet making one majestic flood of harmony.

The Unity of Creation, and the Harmony of events in God's Universe, are grand and delightful thoughts. We cannot fathom them yet, until we “shall find our wings, and soar as fast and free.”¹

Here we are often tempted to think that “everything goes wrong,” that all is at cross-purposes, that we miss good and encounter evil by the merest chances. Chance there is none—such is our happy creed ; what the days and nights have to tell concerning events, is all perfectly reconciled before a Perfect Mind : our minds are small and their sight is limited, but when we see God face to face, we shall see no more darkly.

Let me then, in all my little griefs or disappointments this day, remember this, and try to bring back my mind into tune, by remembering what the heavens declare, and what the firmament sheweth, and what is equally

¹ Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity. Keble.

proved by every little event of life, could I view it as clearly and dispassionately.

Thanks be to God, directly we thus endeavour by His Grace to subdue impatience and distrust, that very effort to take up our cross meekly, be it large or small, fits us quietly into our niche again in His Church Militant, and enables us to take up our part in the eternal chant which Nature never lets fail, nor the Church allows to die away unresponded to, "Glory to God in the Highest. Hallelujah, Amen."

DAY V.

"Lead me forth in Thy truth, and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; in Thee hath been my hope all the day long."—PSALM xxv. 4.

MEDITATION.

THERE was one once who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Such words as these seem to burst from a loving heart; they are such as we ourselves are sometimes ready to say, when fresh from the service of the Sanctuary, or from our own private devotions. But very often, even while we are saying these words, Satan, ever ready to seize an opportunity when we think him furthest below us, or ourselves most raised above him, suggests his insidious considerations. "Having had so much holy pleasure, and even duty this day, return to the demands of this present world; unbend your up-stretched mind; pleasant as devotion is to minds like yours, you are too apt to forget that this world is

not heaven, and that you must not neglect this present life for the enjoyments which are to be your very existence hereafter, but which are but self-indulgence here." In all untruth there is some truth. Just enough of this divine attribute, to prevent us from at once detecting the fallacy, which it is intended to season and recommend. The pleading of Satan in the instance before us is a case in point. It *is* true that our bodies being very earthly, and soon tired, will not allow the spirit to soar in contemplation, or devotion, for very long together, without reminding its exalted companion that it cannot do without rest and refreshment. And then we lament over the weakness of the body, and the bondage in which it keeps the aspiring soul, but we need not, as Satan suggests, drive out holy reflections, because we cannot remain in prayer all day, or turn to something light and worldly, to dissipate our thoughts, because we have been so long serious. It is not the soul that needs rest and refreshment, but the body. Here we are not, and cannot be, always in prayer ; we have duties to perform, and a weak body that cannot accomplish all things, but while the body is resting—while we are performing duties, or living in gentle, friendly, sociable habits with others, we need not forget that God is our hope "all the day long," in all its trials, joys, cares, temptations ; let us not then turn away from our God, nor hold up our hands to any strange god. Thoughts of thankfulness—efforts of self-restraint—patient acquiescence under sorrows, and even under tiny vexations—kindness performed for His sake—exertions persevered in, when one is inclined to relax, for our Blessed Lord and Saviour's sake,—these all may mingle with our daily life, and hallow even our most ordinary tasks and enjoyments.

“ We need not bid, for cloister’d cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.

“ The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves ; a road
To bring us daily nearer God.”¹

If such resolutions attend our morning “ wakening and uprising,” we shall indeed go through the day as faithful followers of our Blessed Lord, saying, “ Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” “ Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me : for Thou art the God of my salvation ; in Thee hath been my hope all the day long.”

May such be the temper of my mind throughout this day, grant, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY VI.

“ Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men : Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.”—PSALM xxxi. 22.

MEDITATION.

THERE are very few people in this vast world who are never provoked, and there are still fewer who would not wish, if it were possible, to be defended from all provocation. Dr. Johnson indeed said, or is reported to have said, “ I like a good hater,” and many

¹ Keble’s Morning Hymn.

have quoted these words, and have been encouraged by this admission of so distinguished a man, to own that they too like one who hateth with vigour. Let us see what Dr. Johnson meant, and what these his imitators mean. Dr. Johnson meant, "I like one who can feel deeply even if he hate, better than one to whom all things are alike"—other than this he hardly could mean, for he was himself capable of strong affection in his odd strange way, and inspired it to a remarkable degree. His imitators mean that they do hate, and hope from his confession that it is not quite forbidden to do so. They also excuse themselves further by saying, "I like violence better than moroseness and ill-will."

But moroseness and ill-will have the more just claim to be called hatred than anger has. Anger is not hatred—we are angry with those we love in some circumstances, but never, or very rarely, with those we hate ; we despise them.

Dr. Johnson was probably right in his opinion as far as it went, but even he could not have loved or liked a disposition ruffled by small provocations—by vexations, mistakes, or trifling disappointments, which compose the largest number of assaults upon our tempers and patience. It is a great misfortune to be naturally irritable, and the more so, as constitution has no doubt much to do with it. But if the Lord has bought me, I am no more at the mercy of circumstances—I will be no more "driven of the waves and tossed." I will ask of Him Who refuseth not, a calm well-poised temper. I will take it often to the Sanctuary, and so keep it armed with holy patience against real injury, against involuntary provocation, and against the exciting "strife of tongues." It is very

good for those who are too irritable and apt to imagine themselves the object of neglect or of unkindness,

- 1st. To try not to see any offence at all.
- 2ndly. If seen, to try and believe them, as they often are, unintended and accidental.
- 3rdly. If quite certain they are intended to wound—to take that opportunity, or the next, of doing good to some one, to any one—but especially to the perpetrator of the offence.

Many people fancy offences meant which are not so, simply from an over-fear of being ill-used without finding it out, and so being reckoned stupid. They are vain, and had rather be really suspicious than be thought dull. And young people often call those dull who forbear to notice their wildness or their practical jokes, or their quick and clever but uncourteous repartees. This is very short-sighted of them, but belongs more properly to a Meditation upon Giving Offence, than to this one upon Taking it.

Let me ask myself if my pride or vanity are easily wounded? or if my sense of what is right to be done never merges into personal irritation at right being left undone or wrong done? Does my temper never prevent my doing good lovingly? The Psalm tells me of the very best check to irritation. It says, “Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own Presence from the provoking of all men.” By His own Presence! Yes, if I had this thought always in my heart, I should be at peace whatever happened, for I should trust every event to Him, and meet every vexation as a message from Him, saying, “Bear this for Me.”

Throughout this day may I keep the fact of His Presence before my eyes. May I consider that He is

looking on, whatever I do—He sees whether I refrain from an angry answer or a revengeful thought for His sake. Provoked to-day I may be, but angry, sullen, cross, peevish, malicious, I need not be, if I remember Whose eye is looking upon me, and ask Him for grace to withstand the temptation. Hearts that are full of God's Presence are more loving and joyous, more gentle and beneficent than any others. They think no evil of others that they need not, and rejoice in believing good of them—they are not stiff or quarrelsome, but amiable and lovers of peace—they are not rough and rude, but polished and courteous, ready to do the kindest offices in the most natural manner and with ready tact, not only because they desire to live peaceably with all men, but because they have so learned Christ as to deny themselves, and thus obtain the mastery over their own wayward humours, while they have also gained by the same process an accurate skill in avoiding to *give* as well as to *take* offence. Let me so seek to obtain "this wisdom which cometh from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." Amen.

DAY VII.

"Let them not say in their hearts, There, there, so would we have it."—PSALM xxxv. 25.

MEDITATION.

WHENEVER the Psalmist speaks of his foes, we may remember that he speaks, not only personally, but prophetically, as a type of our Blessed Lord.

In considering his words as containing lessons for ourselves, we ought therefore to put ourselves in his place, and our besetting sins and spiritual enemies in the place of his adversaries, and not to suppose that we may either invoke or prophesy "confusion of face" and "sudden destruction" upon any one who is, or seems to be, unfriendly to us. In fact, supposing we might use these expressions as they stand recorded, applying them to our real enemies, we should be at a loss how to do so.

Being Christians, we can only consider as true foes such persons as are hindrances to our spiritual progress; malice and injury, slander and neglect, do not necessarily act as such, and we should more likely have to lay our charge against those whose light thoughtlessness, over-indulgence, flattery, easy standard of right and wrong, and complaisance of character, would certainly be most likely to retard our steps, though probably we should be all amazed to make this discovery, and be ready to exclaim, "These our foes—no! they are our chosen companions, our dearest friends!" We dare not apply these expressions, in fact, to any fellow-creatures. But we may use them in thinking of our sins and frailties—we may examine whether our distress and indignation at our spiritual foes are at all in keeping with the expressions of the Psalmist—whether they are in keeping with the language of our Church, where she bids us call ourselves "miserable sinners," and says that "there is no health in us." We may ask ourselves if, when we have fallen, we hear the triumphant song of our Tempter and his angels, "There, there, so would we have it," if we really conceive how much each similar victory strengthens the bands of sin, how much each yielding to temptation

weakens our hold upon our Faith. If our eyes were opened, and we saw the unseen world that is really about us, these things would no longer be a marvel to us.

There is yet another thought that I may well meditate upon this morning ; do I never think, if I do not say, when I hear of some sin being committed, "I thought so !" "I always mistrusted that person !" "I was sure that pride must fall !" "I always said so !" in a spirit too unlike that of the charity that rejoiceth not in iniquity, too like the cruel cry, "There, there, so would we have it ?" The bad of all ages have delighted in levelling others to their own standing, but, alas ! there are too many really earnest-hearted about their own salvation, who yet feel a Satanic pride in the verification of their predictions, the justification of their antipathies, though it be at the cost of a human brother's or even sister's fall ! Nay, even in comparative trifles, do I never delight in seeing any one tyrannized over, teased, worried out of temper and patience, and provoked to hasty words or actions ? When I feel guilty in any little matter of folly and extravagance, do I rejoice to find others equally wrong ? In short, do the sins and misfortunes of others never please, comfort, or amuse me ? Sad sign of depravity—there are too often circumstances in them that even *amuse* me.

If I had a heart attuned to perfect love, nothing would please me that did not please my God, or benefit my neighbour.

On the still summit of Mount Carmel there sat once a prophet and his servant. Foes were beneath them, and the servant trembled. Angels were around them, and the prophet rejoiced. At his request the servant's eyes were opened to see how many were for them. If

our eyes were thus opened, we should combat more vigorously, and we should also love more fervently all who were thus guarded, feeling that they were very dear to our God.

If when we saw a fellow-creature tempted, we saw also Satan's expectant triumph' on the one hand—his Guardian Angel on the other, watching him with anxious love—if we saw his mother in prayer for him, and heard his Saviour's intercession—surely, surely, we could never laugh thoughtlessly, or smile with complacent pride when he falls, be it much or little.

If we can join the derisive joy of Christ's foes, we must not fancy we should have held our peace on Mount Calvary. He tells us Himself, that inasmuch as we show kindness or cruelty to one of the least of His brethren, we do so unto Him. If we rejoice in iniquity now, the day is not far off when ours shall be rejoiced in too. Oh, let me repent of this sin, and so repent, that the Angels in the Presence may rejoice over me, saying, “There, there, so would we have it !” Glory be to Thee, O God. Amen.

DAY VIII.

“And I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight.”—PSALM xxxviii. 17.

MEDITATION.

THERE are in everybody's life, some times, some years, nay even some days, in which he seems to be “set in the plague,” and to find distress or discomfort on all sides. And it is a common remark, that such seasons follow prosperous times, as if we had had

our seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, and might moreover cry out with poor old Jacob, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away ; all these things are against me." We do not always wait for such heavy trials as his, before we fall into his error of impatience and faithlessness. We very easily call out, "all these things are against us," when our plans are crossed, our advantages diminished, or our customary blessings threatened. Every one of us knows the uncomfortable state of mind in which everything seems to happen as it should not. It is perfectly true that on some days a regular string of small calamities will occur,—that some years, we are no sooner relieved from one anxiety, than others rise up to harass us. These are real and tangible trials, but there is a trial too—though not often honoured by being considered as such—in the state of mind that predisposes us to "a day of misfortunes," and in fact courts its own discomfort. On such a day, if we are surrounded by elder members of the family, we think they are all determined to find fault ; if we are ourselves of the elder portion, we imagine the younger ones to be conspiring against our peace ; never had we so many vexations from our usual companions, be they older or younger. On such a day, whatever disaster or trouble occurs to the household at large, seems to bear with peculiar weight upon us : *we* seem to bear "the burden and heat of the day," and the words ever recurring to our lips are still, "And I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight." O that we would go on to the next verse, "For I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin,"—yes, if we would do this, quickly would the thorns drop off our imaginary sorrows, and be turned

to roses on our real ones ; quickly, did we confess the selfishness, the cowardice, and the irritability, that composed our predisposition to a day of misfortunes, should we find Grace to withstand all these wiles of our enemy, and to apply aright these much misused words of the Psalmist, “And I truly am set in the plague.” His heaviness was sorrow for sin ; that he spoke here in his personal, not his prophetic character, is evident from the context. It was then repentance that lay heavy upon his spirit ; it was the plague of his own heart, in which he found himself continually “set.” And how often, how very often, do our habitual faults prove our plague also. How many of the days of successive vexations to which we have alluded find all their sting in some not yet eradicated besetting sins ! Our indolence has made us behindhand all day ; hence numerous annoyances, especially the feeling of self-condemnation. Our temper has been harsh or irritable again ; how much offence has it given and received ! Our vanity has been active and mischievous, has fired up at some fancied slight, or has thrust itself forward for praise, and won only mortification. Or our love of our “own way” has enlisted all these at once, and now we are pierced with self-rebuke and shame. Or sadder still, coldness of heart and wandering thoughts have again assailed us in our devotions ; we have gone forth from them but half-armed against trial and temptation, and we are mourning over this peculiarly grievous besetting sin—this most paralyzing form of “the plague of our own hearts.” Let us mourn this truly, for we shall be comforted. When we sorrow for our sins, this cometh of God’s Grace, and bringeth comfort and help with it, as our Saviour hath declared. When we sorrow only for the consequences of our sins, then we use David’s words

unworthily, and only aggravate our restless discontent, by repeating rebelliously, "And I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight."

Teach me, O Lord my God, to know my own deep wayward heart by Thy Holy Spirit, and to watch and pray against the sin that doth so easily beset me. Let me not forget in every trouble that it cannot come by chance, so that if Thou permit me to be set in the plague, it surely is for Thy great love towards me. Teach me to examine myself and see whether the plague cometh of mine own heart, and in any case to humble myself before Thee, confessing all my sins, and entreating Thy mercy for Jesus Christ's sake. Help me never to repeat these words recklessly, or murmuringly, but with repentance and submission, remembering that to such as come before Thee sorrowing for sin Thou hast promised comfort, and to such as draw nigh unto Thee when they are in heaviness Thou hast promised to give rest. Let me indeed take Thy yoke upon me, and learn of Thee to be meek and lowly, to strive against my besetting sins, and not to struggle, but to humble myself when afflicted by Thy hand, knowing that affliction doth not spring out of the ground, but out of Thine infinite love, O Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY IX.

"**G**od is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble."—PSALM xlvi. 1.

MEDITATION.

PERHAPS when we read these words we remember many instances of their application. We recollect signal deliverances wrought for nations,

armies, monarchs, or we recall cases of extreme distress in which the firm belief herein expressed has supported the dethroned or the forsaken, the bereaved or the sorely tempted, and has brought them through their hour of need. But I am young and have not known many sorrows yet—has the same belief ever strengthened me in difficulty, or soothed me in distress?

Few people reach the age of eighteen, or even of fifteen, without having felt any heavy and exceeding grief—if I have suffered bitterly, what was “my comfort in my trouble?” David says the Word of God was his comfort, because it had “quickened” him. Was the Word of God my comfort? or did I resort to “worldly spell,” to light reading—giddy talking—or anything that promised oblivion for a short space? Is this the way a Christian seeks for help and strength?

In the hour of grief and its attendant dismay we grope as Elymas, seeking some one to lead us by the hand, if we are not accustomed to hear God’s voice saying “Be not afraid”—if His Word has not already quickened and made us His own, by knitting our hearts unto our Divine Saviour, the Lord Jesus.

O Blessed Lord Jesus, teach me to seek Thee continually—be Thou my very present help in my daily temptations. And when Thou shalt please to put upon me this great honour of bearing real sorrow for Thy sake, grant that I may also find Thee ever, ever near; teach me to trace Thy Will and Thy Love in all that befalls me—and if it be Thy good pleasure to make me like unto Thee in suffering, oh, grant unto me that mind which was also in Thee! Make me patient, loving, unselfish, among my fellow-creatures, and towards Thee, submissive, faithful, and truly grateful

that Thou dost put such honour upon Thy poor sinful soldier and servant. And when the first wild storm of sorrow is past, and the broken, shivering, lonely life remains to be taken up and carried on in patient bearing of the Cross, grant unto me, O Lord Jesus, the gift of Thy Holy Spirit day by day to sustain my weak faith, to keep me close to Thee, to give me zeal once more to live and work as though life still looked fair. For though life look no longer fair, Thou wilt have brought me nearer to Thyself, and to Thine Eternal Kingdom, and I shall know more of that holy and wonderful Union with Thee, which is the very life of the Believer, the very breath of Thy true children.

And now that all things are as yet well with me, and with those I love, grant unto me still the loving, trusting mind that looketh to Thee in every matter, great or small, be it vexation or temptation, and saith in the sharp short trial as in the long crushing sorrow, in the living temptation as in the dead struggle, "God is my hope and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Very present!" Be, O Lord God, "very present" with me throughout this day—let me not rejoice nor fear—not undertake nor withstand—not labour nor converse—without feeling Thy presence, and seeking Thine aid. So shall I lie down to rest, singing, God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Oh, clap your hands together, all ye people! Sing unto Him with the voice of melody.

Let the people praise Thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise Thee.

Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear Him. Amen, Amen.

DAY X.

**"Wheress thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast
My words behind thee."**—PSALM L. 17.

MEDITATION.

"**H**ATEST to be reformed." It is given as a feature in the character of one in whom God delighteth not. As I read it I feel condemned, for do not I of all things hate to be reproved? Does not my blood boil directly any reproof or rebuke is addressed to me? Do I take gently the mildest remonstrance? or do I ever feel grateful for such as are administered by those whose right to do so is undoubted, whose duty in doing so is imperative? And yet is it not natural? Does it not seem at the moment as if I did well to be angry? as if it would not be showing a "proper spirit" to submit to being reproved like a child? to allow myself to be always the vanquished party? to take, in silence, less consideration than is due to my age, station, or dignity? to let others see that I have no will of my own—no decision of character—that I am born to be ruled, and domineered over by others? Oh, frequent mistake, and much to be deplored! How often do we take such resistance for a proof of strength, and patient submission as a sign of weakness? When shall we learn that He Who is emphatically said to be "strong and patient," was our example? That Christ was subject—was meek and lowly, under human authority, and human ill-usage—was His the submissive weakness of irresolution? of inability? Was He silent under injury because He knew not what to say? His reply

to Pilate is full of instruction to us, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee."

It is equally true in our case, and it might make us submit even to unjust and cruel demands from our superiors, that all the powers that be are ordained of God, that they could have no power at all, either over or against us, except it were given them.

He Who gives it is—Who?

This question silences every murmur, for we dare not doubt His love. But the temptations to resistance are sometimes very strong when unauthorized persons assume a right to command.

In the case of an usurper seizing authority lawful in itself, our duty is still to respect the office he fills. If it be a private matter—one person in a society endeavouring to lead others by the mere force of will—it cannot be wrong to resist such a bondage as this, but it is best accomplished by a gentle firmness in important matters, and an equally gentle yielding where nothing more than our own convenience (not our principle) is involved.

But between ourselves and those in authority over us this rule is no longer one that we are at liberty to follow, for a quiet, happy, holy life—or reject, for a quarrelsome and troubrous one: it is *imperative*. Those under rule must obey, unless the order given be contrary to God's law. And who are so much under rule as women? From our birth we are all under "tutors and governors." Man assumes to himself the reins of power in due time,—but woman can seldom be considered as equally independent, unless indeed marriage, singling out one and another from her circle of companions, leave her untouched, till death has followed

in his turn, and has borne off all from her home, leaving her alone—a melancholy freedom.

Since then I am born to obey, let me consider how well it is for me, that body, mind, and soul are thus cared for by divinely appointed guardians. The Church—the Government—and my own beloved parents, with whomsoever they appoint over me during their life, or if God deprive me of them, the guardians to whom they entrust me after their death,—have thus the most indisputable right to my grateful and unquestioning obedience. To their reproofs may I never oppose sullenness, nor anger, nor pride, nor obstinacy.

But even when the age is past in which I am subjected to direct reproof, there is yet much need to consider the verse before us, and to pray that we may lay it to heart. There is a time to us each, when, as we have said, the direct command and reproof cease to be addressed to us frequently, and are either quite discontinued, or are reserved for very important matters. Then it is that we regret truly the numerous occasions on which we have cast words of advice behind us; then it is, that the plague of our own heart, and its unsubdued besetting sins, accuse us day by day of having erst “hated to be reproved;” then it is, that we almost wish to hear again the voice of chiding love, and to have once more the once much-hated privilege of being “told of our faults.” Faults to the end of my life I must have, that is to say, imperfections and besetting sins, but the best help in combating them is a spirit ready to own them, and willing to receive reproofs, intentional or accidental, with all humility; not indeed seeking to hear of my faults, as a means of talking about myself, which is vanity most self-deceiving—but willing to believe that I have failings, and that those

who have observed upon them are probably correct in their judgment, and kind in their intentions. Bless me with such a spirit, O Lord my God, this day. Amen.

DAY XI.

"Awake up, my glory; awake, lute and harp: I myself will awake right early.

"I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people; and I will sing unto Thee among the nations."—PSALM lxvii. 9, 10.

MEDITATION.

THIS passage has sometimes been rendered thus : "I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have." Curious that David should call his "glory," and his "best member," that which St. James calls an "unruly member, a fire, a world of iniquity." Yet St. James does not omit all mention of its powers when rightly used : "Therewith bless we God," saith he, and if he immediately adds, "therewith curse we men," it is to lament that out of the same mouth should proceed blessing and cursing. "My brethren," he continues, "these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"

We were not baptized in bitter waters—not before the Tree, whose leaves were healing, was cast into the waters, and blessed them to us. Ought we therefore to be in ourselves sources of bitterness to each other? or of help and comfort? Ought we to use our best member for its highest or its most vile uses? to praise

God or to disown Him by the words of our mouth ? It is singular how much there is concerning words, human and Divine, in the service of this day : " I will praise God because of His Word ; " " In God's Word will I rejoice ; in the Lord's Word will I comfort me ; " " They daily mistake my words,"—besides the false speaking of the wicked; and several other similar passages, as if to impress upon our minds the value of words.

" The Word" being the title by which our Saviour is first mentioned in St. John's Gospel, is a fact which must present itself to our minds while upon this subject. The Word—the revealed, spoken Purpose of the Eternal Godhead—awe comes upon us when we think of this majestic Name.

The Word, secondarily, means of course the inspired, written Will of God : it is not always certain in which sense David uses the expression, but in the Psalms of to-day either reading might serve.

Such is the Word of God. There is yet another meaning, a message or vision specially sent to one of His servants of old, and to His prophets, after the times when " God talked with men." Many of us have perhaps thought that it would be very much easier to follow the spoken than the written Word, but our Lord gives us a conclusive reply in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which warns us, that if we are not appreciating actual privileges, neither should we profit by others, not even by miracles wrought specially for us.

Perhaps after contemplating thus carefully the nature of God's Word, we shrink with shame and confusion in turning to consider our own ; how much of uselessness, folly, exaggeration, conceit, and worldliness, even our most guileless conversations betray ; how much there

is to mourn over, even when we have kept clear of malice, evil-speaking, untruth, levity, and angry passions. Oh, let not only my stated devotions, but my daily converse sing praises unto Thee, O my Lord God ! Let gentleness and courtesy, liveliness and good humour, make me a pleasant companion to those I live with, and thus show forth Thy praise.

Let me rise early to praise Thee, and keep the thought of Thee before me all the day, like a bright thread to guide me through a labyrinth of duties and temptations. May a cheerful tact, a quiet ready sympathy, an active kindness, and an unselfish meekness, make my speech and my silence alike judicious, and let me on every occasion, from a grateful heart, sing and give praise with the best member that I have. Let me also cultivate my talents to Thy glory, awake lute and harp to the sweet sounds of Thy praise : all these are powerful shields against tongues that are like sharp swords. Nothing so effectually keeps us in a peaceful frame of mind, as abundant occupation pursued as unto God, and this, with every accomplishment worth having, may fairly be attained. If our heart is fixed, we may in every thing sing and give praise. The bounding love and confidence expressed in this Psalm, and which begins to spring out of David's troubles at the ninth verse of the preceding one, are not greater than we may enjoy in our less varied and adventurous lives, if we will. If we rejoice that our land and Church sing unto Him among the nations, and remember that we are required to bear our part ; if we are always living upon God's Word, and if we believe heartily that He sees the faintest movement of our hearts, we shall not lack for strong quiet trust in sorrow, support in prosperity, and (most

difficult to find of all) blithe interest in daily work—or patience even in the want of it.

So will I go forth to-day singing, “Awake up, my glory ; awake, lute and harp : I myself will awake right early.” Amen.

DAY XII.

“**D** God, Thou art my God ; early will I seek Thee.
“**M**y soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after
Thee in a barren and dry land, where no water
is.”—PSALM lxiii. 1, 2.

MEDITATION.

IT is impossible in reading these verses not to be struck with their resemblance to the well-known and most beautiful forty-second Psalm. It is, or ought to be, impossible also to read them without pausing to consider the fervour of this longing after God, and to ask ourselves if we know anything at all of so much desire for anything, and if so, for what ?

When we are very young Hope is but feeble within us, and can reach out expectant desires but just so far as we can reach out expectant hands ; but the power increases daily, and we soon pass through several stages of it. First, of course, we desire that which we see,—then we can look forward to enjoying to-day what we did enjoy yesterday—then we begin to expect a promised good, if the fulfilment of the promise be not very distant—then from this the transition is easy to looking for probable material good, and from this again to probable abstract good, till at length we ardently desire promised blessings that seem hardly within possibility ; our Hope is coloured by Faith, its twin-

sister. Nor has there been less change in the objects of our hopes than in the actual power of hoping at all. The flower, fruit, or toy of the infant, the gift, prize, or holiday of the child, yield to the desire of things less tangible : success in enterprise, meetings with those we love, intellectual distinction, spiritual growth unto sanctification—until we truly “look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come,”—yes, until we say with David, “ My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land, where no water is.” Happy are we, if we can say so in all sincerity. None are so likely to obtain God’s heavenly grace and favour, and the continual sense of His presence, as those who thus hope and long for these blessings ; and none are so likely to long thus earnestly, as those who have made the first verse their own also ; “ O God, Thou art my God ; early will I seek Thee.” Yea, my Lord God, Thou art my God ; I was early taken before Thee, solemnly dedicated to Thy service, and signed with the sign of the Cross. It was given unto me then to occupy a niche in Thy visible Church : am I a true member thereof now ? Is my heart dedicated unto Thee ? Are my desires sealed with the sign of the Cross ? Have I wandered from Thy Sanctuary, and left my niche empty, while I sought the broad way of danger ? Then didst Thou seek me early, but I have not sought Thee. Then has the coldest ingratitude been repaid to the tenderest care. I have been brought near unto the Altar, and have turned away ; my heart has not given itself wholly unto God. Yet now while I read these words of David, while I consider and see how sweet and good it is to be a true follower of the Lord—even were it not necessary to salvation—when I think of all

that the Lord hath done for me, and is still doing for me, of all His love, and of my relation to Him, my soul desires eagerly to give unto Him my early youth, the time when my powers are almost fresh and vigorous, and life looks fairest, and hope is most vivid ; let me then consecrate these powers and affections, and centre in Him my hopes and desires ; gladly looking forward upon life, not only because it looks fair, but because I know that no cloud can arise by chance, no sorrow supervene that He will not support me under ; gladly looking forward to duties, because I know that none shall come upon me unprepared, that no position, however difficult, shall demand of me energies that He cannot, and will not, supply ; no perplexity occur, in which He shall not be a light unto my feet, and a lantern unto my paths, and shall teach me what to do, and what to say, making in every temptation a way for me to escape, and to glorify His Holy Name.

It is often said, that youth should devote its joys and its morning cheerfulness to God ; no doubt it is true, but youth has more than this to devote. If the strength and energies are unexhausted then, if the beauty of the body and freshness of the mind make them a fitter offering to our fancy, than the careworn harassed frame and thoughts of middle age, yet this is not all that youth has to offer ; nor is it for middle age alone that it needs to lay up support and strength : youth is full of feeling ; quick sensation, stinging pain, entrancing joy, alternately hurry its pulses, and there are perhaps no years in which the bitterness of grief falls so heavily as those when childhood's varying impulses have given place to the equally vivid and more enduring feelings and passions of youth. If

heavy sorrow fall upon us at this time, how deeply does it penetrate, how often does it colour the whole life and character ! If we moreover consider that it is in youth that God has placed those strong sympathies that we call, in distinction to all other sentiments, Love, we may be sure that in His sight youth is an age very capable of extreme joy and sorrow. Then do not let us suppose, as too many do, that its joys and sorrows are an accident of life apart from religion, or that they incapacitate us for fervent devotion. On the contrary, at an age when every feeling is awake and alive, and might lead us almost to worship whatever we deem our happiness for the time being, or to despise without hope, if deprived thereof, let us consecrate these lively feelings by making God their Hope and their fortress. Youth is ever running into extremes : human nature is thus constituted, and asserts itself most strongly in this manner, in youth, before habit and the world have yet chained us down at all. The eager sanguine spirit of youth, and its intense dread of dull mediocrity, fan the flame ; and whatever young persons undertake, they undertake zealously. Shall we then waste these powers upon trifles ? Shall I be energetic upon worldly matters, and shall not the love of Christ, manifested to me in my dawn of life, and continued up to this time, " constrain me " to give myself unto Him ; to make His service my delight, to consider myself accountable to Him, not only for my time and my talents, but oh ! still more stringently, for my affections and my desires ? Not only to seek Him early, but to go on longing after Him alway, and seeking Him in all His own appointed ways, in the church, the cottage, by the wayside, and by the lowly sick-bed ; in obeying my parents and in teaching the

young ; at the Table of the Lord, and at the shrine of my heart's affections—in every varied scene having this single aim—in every mood of feeling still looking stedfastly towards Him.

There are many who say at their Confirmation, "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee." How many go through life, saying truly, "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land, where no water is?" Such longing, such thirsting, will never be in vain. God Himself will answer it, God will make our "lips fain when we sing unto Him," and will enable us to perceive in all His works, in all our lives,

"Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end."¹

DAY XIII.

"He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house.

"The singers go before, the minstrels follow after : in the midst are the damsels playing with the timbrels."—PSALM lxviii. 6, 25.

MEDITATION.

THE first of these verses describes a happy household, the second a national and religious festivity. I am one of a household, I am one of a nation—my household and my nation fear God, and are called by His Name. A Branch of His Holy Church hath taken root and flourished exceedingly in our land, and the nation is blessed with increase and prosperity. Many happy households are there in it, where the altar fire

¹ Paradise Lost, Morning Hymn.

of devotion is carefully tended alike in joy and in sorrow, where the life of the household is gladdened by this light, and where the voice of love and peace is heard. But such households are formed of individuals, and habits of family piety will not be enough if these individuals do not each severally cherish personal piety. The outward show may be fair, but it will be but hollow seeming, and will give neither comfort nor support in the day of trouble, if each soul love not the light—if each separately feareth to bring his deeds to the light, lest they be reproved. Let me consider if such be my case—if I cherish any secret sin that cramps me in my devotions, and keeps me far from God, because I fear to find that I must renounce it. Or do I freely confess my sins in private prayer, and then come with delight to the devotions of the household, joining them in heart and voice, and thus bearing my part in sending up this incense of love and praise? And in my private devotions do I invoke blessings upon all those who daily pray with me? If we each consider thus our several duties in Family Prayer, we shall be all “of one mind” in our morning service, and shall go forth strengthened for the day’s labours. Such a beginning of the day will indeed go far to influence our minds throughout its course. Having knelt together in real prayer before we come into much contact with each other and the world, we shall find our judgment better poised, our temper more calm and genial, and our principles more clear and defined. Thus we shall be less likely to be tempted by each other to do wrong, or to neglect duty, less inclined by anger, pettishness, or any wayward, unruly tempers, to mar our own peace and the “one-mindedness” of the household.

As long as there are human beings, there will be endless varieties in opinion upon every subject ; but as long as there is union in heart in daily worship, so long may the varieties of opinion co-exist with the deepest and most zealous affection and unanimity in practice. Let me carefully avoid anything like a narrow feeling of dislike towards those who differ from me, let me especially pray and guard against being drawn into religious controversy at all, and particularly with those who dwell with me in the house.

The heartburnings and party strifes that often split families and friendships upon these subjects, and upon these only, arise from the deficiency, not the abundance of religion in the heart.

There are no lines so straight and direct as the lines of light. They all start from a common centre, the sun ; and if we could retrace them all their wondrous way, they would lead our eye back to their common centre. So too the beams of divine knowledge and wisdom must, if traced up to their origin, bring the soul to one point, the Sun of Righteousness.

It is not truth that leads us into the maze of conflicting statements—it is feeble and partial glimpses of truth. The whole bright road must begin and end in God. Let us give Him the whole heart—let us believe that others are in earnest in doing so too ; and therefore let us hate no man with “religious hatred,” which strange contradiction is the most venomous of all hatreds.

But, alas ! with those I love best I am not always “of one mind.” In my secret thoughts I wrong them, misjudge their conduct and motives, and undervalue their exertions, and self-denials, while I exaggerate my own. Perhaps even I complain of one person to another,

or join in a murmur against one absent individual, or against some one in authority. These are all mean, cowardly, and ungenerous ways of venting petty indignation. Perhaps the object of my displeasure knows not of having offended me, or if he knew it, has, with a generous confidence in my affection and good will, supposed that all is forgiven. Were we both to die suddenly, which of us would be found guilty of unexpelled poison in our thoughts?

From talebearing and murmuring, from envy, hatred and malice, from foolish talking and evil speaking, from quarrelsome tempers and proud sensitiveness, from carelessness of the feelings of others, and from all harshness and coarseness in dealing with them, the Lord deliver me this day, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

DAY XIV.

"My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee, and so will my soul whom Thou hast delivered."—
PSALM lxxi. 21.

MEDITATION.

IF we are only feebly moved towards repentance, and desire but faintly to be restored to God's image, we need not therefore fancy that we are not repentant. The very slightest consciousness of sin, and desire of leading a religious life, must be the gift of God, an evidence of His Will concerning us. Weakness, and coldness, and difficulty in prayer, need not therefore discourage us, only they must not remain unnoticed. We must not be satisfied to remain cold and weak, we

must not be unconscious of our difficulty in praying as we ought, for that is being indifferent, the most alarming state of all.

Neither must we care *a little* about our spiritual improvement; and the spiritual good of others, for that is being lukewarm, and lukewarmness is a sin more deadly to souls, more valuable to Satan, than many more startling ones. He has an immense store of reasonings by which to damp our energies, and sap our warm, living devotedness.

Yes ; for his marked victims are those in whom energy and devotedness are characteristics ; it is such characters that he speciously attacks by such suggestions as the following :—

“ You are doing enough, you are no worse than others, you do not fail oftener, but you care more, you care even too much about your sins and errors. Why should you do more than others ? why fast ? why pray ? can all this really save your soul ? you know it cannot. Be not too rash with your self-improvement ; you will make to yourself enemies by affecting to be better than others, which you are not, after all these attempts. Why then affect it ? and make yourself disagreeable, by being more particular than they are, or by refusing to do as they do, and thus tacitly reproaching them ? ”

Grant me, O my Saviour, Thy merciful forgiveness, if I have ever listened to such suggestions as these. Help me to have continually before mine eyes, the value of my calling in Thee. Enable me to answer every astute invention of mine enemy, with the words of Thy will and commands ; so shall he flee from me. May I not shrink from any exertion, any avowal, any self-denial, any endurance, that my duty may bring in its course. Neither let me be deterred from working

for Thee, by the true fact presented that all my labour is as nothing to save my soul ; true fact that my labour is nothing, that it cost more to redeem my soul ; and yet, Lord Jesus, it is equally true that since Thou didst redeem me, labour I must ; since Thy Holy Spirit sanctifieth me, labour I must ;—too little, could I spend every breath in Thy service,—too little could action prove that I am Thine,—too little could every word declare that in Thee is my trust and my peace, and that I may truly exclaim with the holy Psalmist, “ My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee, and so will my soul whom Thou hast delivered.”

If we read such expressions as these coldly, and without feeling love and gratitude analogous to this, we let in much danger of lukewarmness and unconcern. We should never read expressions, either of intense sorrow for sin, or of abounding joy in the Lord of our Salvation, without asking ourselves how far they are really applicable to ourselves. In David’s devotional exercises there is no coldheartedness, no indifference, no languor, but a most earnest thankfulness, a most glowing faith, a serene and lively hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a true enjoyment of all the offices and ordinances of religion. In fact many of his Psalms are written for choral services, and we cannot doubt the zeal and fervour with which the Psalmist joined his voice to the choir. Thus may it be with me ; may the life and spirit of these beautiful Hymns kindle in me a better and truer consciousness of the privileges I enjoy, and summon me to join aloud in the glad voice of the Church, whosoever she bids us lift up our hearts unto the Lord, and be fain when we sing unto Him, because He hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice. May we indeed rejoice for ever and ever in

the salvation that He hath granted unto us. Amen,
for His sake, Amen.

DAY XV.

"When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God;
when my heart is vexed, I will complain."—
PSALM lxxvii. 3.

MEDITATION.

"WHEN I am in heaviness, I will think upon God." He who could thus speak had certainly known heavy sorrow—he could have told of the nothingness of comfort—of the deadness of resignation—of the utter worthlessness of all remaining joys, when the heart is wrung and broken, when the only boon it longs for is solitude and darkness, its only companion the beloved one's image, its only light that lost one's love fondly remembered. And if he knew the worst agonies of bereavement, no less perfectly did he know the tortures of anxiety and suspense. Did not David speak feelingly of these also? In that touching simile, "how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill," who does not recognize the soul oft tried by fear and horror; hunted by sorrow "as a partridge on the mountains," not knowing whither to look for succour, longing to flee away and be at rest! Oh! worn with every kind of sorrow—sickness, suspense, fear, ill-usage, betrayal and bereavement—as a man, a king, a friend, and a father—David indeed could speak to the sorrowing heart, as one who knew well what sorrow was.

Nor in the heaviest burden of all—though the most blessed—sorrow for sin—was David less experienced.

What penitence of ours equals his penitential Psalms ! What sinner mourning for sin turns not to his fifty-first Psalm ? What penitent under the mild law of Gospel love can feel deeper sorrow for his rebellious ingratitude, than is expressed in David's repentant prayers ? or what faith is there amongst us that is too firm in itself to find a prop and a stay in the trustful exclamations that break through his tears and lamentations : "And Thou continuest holy, O Thou worship of Israel ;" "God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble ;" "Oh what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shewed me, and yet didst Thou turn and refresh me ?"

There is scarcely one cry of pain or sorrow from David's lips that does not end in songs of deliverance, thanksgiving, triumph, or tranquil trust ! Nor is it as prophetic of Him Who should subdue all things, even the last enemy, Death, that these praises find place beside the petitions. Let us not forget that David, a type, was also an example for us. Our very text shows us whence he drew that strong comfort that ever followed his depression and his penitence. "When I am in heaviness," he says, "I will think upon God : when my heart is vexed, I will complain." Full many of us take the last part of the verse readily enough, but not the first. Many of us complain readily, that our fate is sad, our fare in this world indifferent, our vexations many, our pleasures few, and dashed with drawbacks. Or if we despise so general a whine, we mention every particular instance as it occurs, in which we are less fortunate than others, and magnify every small evil into a large one, large enough, at least, to give us a right to fatigue our friends by a recital thereof. Or we indulge in a habit of complaining of one person to another : a

mean, cowardly, dastardly spirit this, that dares not speak openly, and cannot bear silently, but must tell to one and another its one-sided complaints of other people's temper, manner, conduct, &c.

This is not the sort of complaint which we can carry before God ; this is not the heaviness in which we think upon Him, nor in which we can expect any comfort from Him, until we repent of our own share in our own discomfort, and strive to live peaceably with our fellow-creatures as much as lieth in us, and to resign ourselves meekly to His will, in such sufferings as are not caused by our own fault.

We may profitably observe, that David speaks of two classes of sufferings ; he says, "when I am in heaviness," and "when my heart is vexed,"—as if in the former he included only large, in the latter small misfortunes. But he has one and the same remedy for each ; in the time of his trouble, whatever it may have been, he sought the Lord : he cried unto God with his voice—sure that the Lord would hear him. Oh let us "cry aloud and spare not" unto the Lord, whatever be our sorrow, even when we are tempted to say "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will He shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure," even when we are so deeply sunk in misfortune or in ill-humour that every thing seems to be against us—let us even then, being silent and calm before men, cry aloud from the depths of our heart unto God, confessing all that is our own infirmity, all that is wrong in us, and either causes our misfortunes, or makes us restless and impatient under them.

There are characters to whom it is an aggravation of every pang, that any human being should see or suspect its existence. There are sorrows of so deep

and intense a nature, that all who suffer them must feel this dread of observation. And we may respect and admire the calm endurance with which we know that such sufferings often are concealed, and the serene and even cheerful bearing that has sometimes curtailed in a lifelong anguish. Highly to be honoured, indeed, is such heroic endurance, if only it sprang not from the hard philosophy of the Stoic, but from the firm faith and patience of a Christian—if the heart that never complains to man pours out its bitterness in complaining to its God, not murmuringly, but in prayer for strength to bear all, and having done all—to stand. Human sympathy, though all inadequate to heal, will not be harshly rejected by such a spirit; nor will human suffering be despised by it, as less heavy than its own concealed burden, nor avoided, as presenting a painful spectacle from which it has a right to exempt itself.

Nor, in considering David's solace in distress, can we forget how much greater reason we have to think upon God in our sorrows. He indeed foreshadowed Christ, the Man of Sorrows; but we are distinctly promised that through tribulations we are made like unto Him, that it is in grief and pain that we are brought nearest unto Him, and that for this cause, "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Not indeed of merit, but of His infinite mercy and free grace. Oh let not then any tribulation or temptation sever me from the love of Christ! Let me "die with Him that I may also live with Him." Let me bear for His sake my vexings of heart now, come they of great or little cause,—and then when He shall say "Come, and I will shew thee what great things thou must suffer for My

Name's sake," I may be strong and very courageous, knowing that He is near me, and that it is His will to make me "perfect through suffering." Come then whatever He sees fit to send me this day, I will still say, "When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God : when my heart is vexed, I will complain ;" "when my spirit was in heaviness, Thou knewest my path ;" "in the morning and at noonday will I cry unto Thee, and that instantly, and Thou shalt hear my voice."

Amen, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

DAY XVI.

"Turn Thee again, Thou God of Hosts, look down from heaven ; behold, and visit this vine ;
 "And the place of the vineyard that Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest so strong for Thyself."—PSALM lxxx. 14, 15.

MEDITATION.

THE vine, laden with her beauty and luxuriance, her clinging tendrils, and showers of foliage and fruit, is made a frequent type in Scripture—now of the tender wife and mother—now of the Spouse of Christ, our Mother Church—and again of Christ Himself, in Whom abideth every true branch. The vine spoken of in this Psalm is doubtless the Jewish Church : God forbid that it ever rightly typify the state of His Christian Church ! God forbid that those who make divisions and heartburnings should so far prevail as to break down her hedge, and leave her to the tender mercies of the wild boar out of the woods, and the wild beasts of the field,—nay, even to the mistaken kindness of those who would lop and

prune her with unsparing hand, until not luxuriance but life were in danger. We need not ask if we have deserved such calamity ; few are the thoughtful minds that can read the predictions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, of the woes decreed to Israel's Vine, and of the sins that called them forth, without feeling that we too are guilty : and that we are guilty more especially "concerning our brother :" that there are too many amongst us whose sorrows have not been bound up, whose head is sick, whose heart is faint, for lack of heavenly teaching, and whose Sabbaths are polluted, as much from ignorance as from depravity : that we are too much like the rebellious city, seeking counsel and instruction, but not of God—wise in worldly knowledge, but not in the wisdom from above ; so that if the safety of the glorious Vine set in our promised Land depended only upon our unanimous zeal and care thereof, the hedge had long since been broken down, and the fair Vine uprooted. Thanks be unto the Lord, He Himself has set a hedge about His Vine, and has hitherto preserved it unto us. But let us not presume upon this mercy. Let us remember that He has given unto us His words to keep, and His commandments to obey ; these are our weapons wherewith to guard our Vine. There is a blessing attached, in this day's Psalms to the dutieous fulfilment of His laws, where the preface to the Decalogue is quoted : "I am the Lord thy God Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt :" and is immediately followed by the words : "Open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it."

If we obey heartily, and expect much of our God's goodness, He will not deny us the supplies of His Grace ; He will increase in us true religion, He will behold and strengthen our Vine, and make its branches

strong for Himself, He will delight therein, and grant unto it to show forth His glory.

All the Psalms for this day are tender and beautiful, but these verses peculiarly so. That mournful lament of a few true constant hearts for the misfortunes of their loved Church, the self-abasement with which they own her desecration through the sin and carelessness of her members, are echoed in our own Liturgy in a deprecating cry :

“ O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thy Name’s sake.”

“ O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.”

“ O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thine honour.”

A short time before, we have prayed, saying,

“ O God, deal not with us after our sins :

“ Neither reward us after our iniquities.”

There is often much beautiful coincidence to be noticed between the Psalms for the day and the Liturgy. If we throw together a number of circles they will cut each other at inconceivable and unpremeditated points—because they are perfect. One dares not call the Liturgy perfect, but it is so moulded upon inspiration as to be very nearly aptly represented by this the symbol of Perfection, as of Eternity : and happy are we if we rightly and duly prize the blessing of such a Liturgy, and diligently use it on every occasion of social, and many an one of private, worship.

Thus rejoicing in the shade of our vine, and uniting to defend it, God will bless our endeavour, and He will make it a blessing to us ; He will continually guard

our Vine, nay, He will Himself make of our loyalty and obedience an hedge to keep out the foe.

Our vine is set in a fair portion of the Vineyard ; let us see that when the Lord cometh we yield Him the fruits in due season. These fruits are not indeed of value unto Him, save as proofs of the vitality of His Vineyard ;—they are not in the parable represented as making the husbandmen's claim to occupy the ground, but the refusal to yield such fruits was their condemnation. Of His own free gift He gave them that rich portion ; of His own free gift He set me also in His Vineyard, it may be in a very small, weak form, in a very lowly, humble place, but since He has set me here I must give evidence of life and love—I must render unto Him the fruits in due season—I must not be an idler in His Vineyard, or I shall stray forth of its happy boundaries, and shall lose myself in endless mazes.

Oh let not such be my history ! May a loyal, zealous heart cling fast to the Church wherein God has placed me, and may a deathless love spring up to Him in songs of praise and thankfulness, and by a devoted life show forth His praise, and prove my abiding in Him.

May my love for my own Church never make me lightly condemn others, nor mistrust their sincerity and zeal in their worship.

May my toleration for others never dim my sense of the happy privilege I enjoy in being a member of my own Church, nor dull my living, glowing love and fidelity to her.

O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, O Thou that has called us near to Thyself, grant me year by year, and day by day, a truer and deeper devotion unto Thy service, a higher and purer gratitude for all Thy mercies and favours ! For my Creation, Preservation

and Redemption, do I laud and magnify Thy holy Name. That I have been placed in Thy Christian Church, and led in the right way, do I glorify Thee, O Thou merciful God. Oh let me not sink at last under the weight of mercies unheeded, and privileges neglected ! Thy Grace alone can kindle in any soul the Life that seizes upon and clings to Thy great Salvation ; have mercy upon me, let me not seem to come short of it, make me to believe in Thee with a living Faith. Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief. Amen ; for Thine own sake, Amen.

DAY XVII.

"**D** knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy name."—PSALM lxxxvi. 11.

MEDITATION.

THREE is no one who has ever deeply felt the waywardness of his own nature, the uncontrollable violence of its passions, and the inconstancy of its adherence to that which is good, who has not often desired to have his heart fixed steadily, unwaveringly upon God.

There is also no one who has that which often makes a wayward temper, *i.e.* deep impetuous feelings, strong affections, and ungovernable impulses, who does not know the feeling well of being so knit in heart to some beloved object, that that influence is unvarying, that his fidelity to it is unswerving, and that the waters of his soul, however troubled, never fail to reflect *that* image. A parent, a brother, a friend, or one dear as each, and dearer than all, it may be, unto whom our soul is knit as was David's soul unto Jonathan's.

In one sense knit together ought all the members of one body to be—whether that body be Christ's Church, or its emblem, a Christian family, or a society united for good works. To each of these are applicable the words, “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” But David's soul was knit unto Jonathan in a more special way than this, and David's earnest prayer unto his God was, “O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name.”

Let me consider whether I do wish to be thus “knit in heart” unto God? Do I really desire to have His will ever before me, to know no will but His? To be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God? To have no desire so strong as that of pleasing Him? Then let me steadily inquire what means are found most effectual to knit the heart unto Him. A careful and diligent study of His Word, and much prayer in private. But these must be supported by constant attendance on all holy ordinances, and especially by frequently and humbly drawing near to the Lord's Table, to receive the aid of His heavenly grace.

And, also, let us not forget quiet, deep meditation upon all He has done for us; upon all the proofs we daily experience of His love, and of His protecting care. Let us come more and more near unto Him by every appointed means, and then, as the light of day lights up, hour by hour, places long hid in shadow, and discovers hidden things, so shall the light of His Spirit shine into our hearts, and gradually expel every trace of that dominion of sin which keeps us from loving and coming to the light.

Even so lighten my darkness, O Lord. Teach me to come gladly to the light, that my sins may be

reproved, and my heart illumined with Thy grace in every secret corner. Help me to rejoice in the Day-spring from on high, and enable me to bear witness of that light in my generation. O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name. Amen.

DAY XVIII.

“The days of our age are threescore years and ten ; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow ; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.

“O teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”—PSALM XC. 10, 12.

MEDITATION.

A S long as there are young hearts in this present world, so long will they read this verse with a secret feeling that it does not much concern them ; so long will it be preached to them from it, that they are not to trust to having seventy or eighty years, because this verse declares they cannot have more, and that even of that space the last portion is labour and sorrow.

Young people generally feel that an early death is very beautiful and perhaps desirable, but that a long life is almost certain to be theirs ; and this is the very reason that death wears the enchanting hues that distance lends. We are speaking of course of young people carefully educated, in ordinary good health, anxious to serve and please God, and desirous also, as is natural at their age, to gather the “garlands of

delight"¹ not forbidden to them. And yet sometimes when they think of the temptations of life, its troubles, its "uncertain joy and certain sorrow," they feel a strange longing to die, and thus escape the coming years of trial, and they look upon death rather as a sleep, or a fainting fit, than as a change of actual existence.

To them "threescore years and ten" is a vague sound, totally uninteresting. They dread growing old. They think of it as becoming plain, infirm, useless, and an incumbrance to others; and it seems much more easy and pleasant to lie down and sleep in death, while we are still fondly cherished, should be deeply regretted, and have not seen the "hues of our rich unfolding morn,"² absorbed and lost in "summer's flaring ray,"³ or wept out in autumn's mournful dews. But when we think thus, we do not enough consider if this is bearing the cross manfully, if it is following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. He surely accomplished His full destiny, and did not hasten by one hour the time of His release from this tabernacle.

Again, should we not ask ourselves diligently whether we are prepared to join the inhabitants of the land we desire to reach? if we have learned what spirit they are of, and have caught their language and their tone? can obey with their obedience, and rejoice with their rejoicing?

If such be the case, the desire of death is perfectly consistent, yet should we not desire, but only hope for it in patient faith.

If such be not the case now, oh! may we be taught to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom;

¹ Third Sunday in Lent. Keble. ² Morning Hymn. Keble.

³ Lines to the Redbreast.

for the promise of this world's good, could we surely grasp it for threescore years and ten, would never, never satisfy our souls all that time, can never, never give but a vain and hollow joy, a bubble that the cold breath of grief and the experience of advancing years dispel in an instant. Supposing that we are sure to live out the full days of man, and have already gone through the long period of eighteen or twenty years' incomplete growth and maturity, by which human nature is singularly marked out from all other animal nature, as a creature whose existence *cannot* finish here ; supposing too that thirty seems to us a very distant age, and quite the extreme limit which the most indulgent could give to the period of youth—how brief, how very brief a portion of the seventy is left for all that youth considers as perfect enjoyment of life, health, and vigour ! How soon must it be forced upon every mind that “calm decay” is the written law of Nature, and asserts itself even in the very halo of joyous spring-tide.

If then I am sure of living out all my days, I am still more sure, that for the full enjoyment of this world there is but a very little portion of them in which it is not to be expected that clouds and sorrows must come to all, and will not spare me. If I could be spared all else, I must myself lose the elasticity of youth, and become day by day less able to enjoy. And I cannot conceal from myself that God in His wisdom and mercy has left it most uncertain to me how many of these years I am to live. So that, taking it even upon the lowest ground, it would be wise not to count upon a long life, nor to desire it.

But why should we take it upon low ground ? What is our calling, our inheritance, our sonship ? Truly

such as maketh not afraid. Happily we may bless God and say that “neither death, nor life, nor any other creature, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.” Only let us examine and see if we are ready to be found His in life and in death.

I will so examine myself. I will think upon the list that appears daily in public, of those whom God has called hence ; all ages meet my eye there, all varieties of accident and disease. How would it be with me if my name were shortly to be published there ? To some it would not be news, for they would already have wept over me ; to others the announcement would bring a sudden thrill of pain, and they would weep ; others would say they had known me slightly, and would speculate upon their scanty knowledge, and so my name would pass from earth, and I should be of the children of men no more. But how would it be with *me* ? Should I be among the children of God ? Should I have closed mine eyes in peace to awake up after His likeness ? Should I have laid aside an existence whose sorrows and joys had all been hallowed by His blessing and acknowledged as proofs of His love ? Should I have entered upon real life, feeling that my best existence was only beginning, and that my true Home and true Friend were ready to receive me ?

What then would be to me the anxieties and troubles of earth ? My place there, my power there, my pain and sorrow there—

“ When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past ? ”¹

¹ St. John’s Day. Keble.

Such will indeed be my happy death, come when it may, if I be indeed continually ready,—

“Wishing, not struggling, to be free,”¹—

if everything speak to me of God, and of eternity—if I so number my days, and apply my heart unto wisdom now, that every hour as it strikes may say unto me, not in vain, “Watch.”

“Death cannot come
To him untimely, who is fit to die.
The less of this cold world—the more of heaven :
The briefer life—the earlier immortality.”

DAY XIX.

“O come, let us sing unto the Lord : let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.”—PSALM xcvi. 1.

MEDITATION.

If we were in search of new subjects for meditation, certainly this verse would not be selected for the purpose ; but we are not so curious in the matter of novelty, as of adoration, and it is probable that, even in the beautiful Book of Psalms, there are few passages more suggestive of pure adoration than this one, so familiar to our ears, so long known and loved.

There are many persons whose waking thoughts are generally some loved verse. There are some to whom the Psalms of the day spontaneously suggest themselves, when they open their eyes to the morning light. How they all rejoice to be thus visited needs not to tell. Happy indeed should their days be who almost

¹ Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. Keble.

unconsciously begin them in praise—as if the words of inspiration were waiting to enter their hearts before any profane thought dared to intrude. But if our daily readings thereof have not made the adoring expressions of David quite so present to us, we may yet remember how often the words we are considering have sounded joyfully in our ears, and called upon us to let our hearts go up singing to the gates of Heaven with joy and thankfulness, or to lift up our voice in sorrow, crushing down out of sight our personal grief and heaviness, to swell the note of praise, and bear our part in the general chant of grateful love. The effort is in this last case painful, but it is blessed ; the very attempt to merge our individual suffering in an act of general adoration proves as soothing as the acts of loving and obeying always are,—and the very willingness to praise strengthens us to endure.

Again, if we are wandering in mind, or cold in heart, and have been but slightly in earnest during the first part of the service, this call to praise God falls upon our ear with a sweet suddenness that immediately compels us to throw our energies into the happy work before us, and not to lose such opportunities for the employments of our best powers. But perhaps it is not in the sanctuary at all, but at home, that we are thus called upon to-day ; yet let us still be in the same mind, and if we may not chant, let us read cheerfully, brightly, as those who feel that they are “heartily rejoicing.” The right tone of reading for the Psalms is, by the way, a point of some importance. They are sometimes prophetic, sometimes historical, sometimes doctrinal, but for the most part *choral* and *devotional*. It is evident, therefore, that the tone and manner of reading a Psalm should be adapted to its nature ; and

that a strain of lively rejoicing should not be lost in a slow, dry, didactic utterance, nor monotonously slurred through. Nor should a tender mournful lament for sin, or confession of anguish, be read either in the bright and joyous tones suited to a "Praise the Lord," or in those of deliberate narrative. It would seem needless to mark such incongruities, but my heart reproaches me that inattention has often made me drag down as it were with a millstone some song of praise, meant to waft the soul on wings of adoration to Heaven—and to read with a loud, harsh tone such words as these, "Take heed unto me, and hear me, how I mourn in my prayer, and am vexed." Far better than this is it to hear all either intoned, monotoned, or read alike in a "melancholy minor" which never can offend.

May I never more thus obscure the beauty of those invaluable treasures of Prayers and Praises,—for such they are,—full abundantly of suitable forms for every varying state of the Christian heart, whether it need to confess, to invoke, to deprecate, to plead, to implore, to intercede, or to dedicate, to return overflowing praises, or most rare, most blessed of all—simply to adore.

Yes, most rare; it is too rare. Amongst us this great characteristic of our less happy sister Church of Rome, this one form of worship attainable by natural religion, is often neglected by us who have so much cause for it. The hours of adoring contemplation spent, alas! before a shrine or a relic, have they any adequate counterpart with us who have been released from the darkness of these curtains to truth? The hill and the wood, the mountain and the ocean, that have awakened such earnest worship of the God of Nature in wayward hearts that despised to hear of their safety in the God

of their Redemption, are they for ever calling in vain upon us to adore, simply to adore, the Infinite Love of Him Who hath become our exceeding great salvation ?

Oh let us cultivate the power of calling our minds from all else, to fix them in silent love upon our Saviour. To work, to read, to pray, to praise, all are invaluable to us ; but let us in our silent chamber, in the empty sanctuary, by the river, or the mighty sea—beside the tranquil grave, beneath the shadow of a great rock—or the brow of a lofty mountain—while waiting for others, in sleepless nights, or in suffering days—lift up our mental gaze, and fix it steadfastly, lovingly, in mute, but intense adoration upon our God. Each attribute of God, each wonder of Creation, each event of History, or of our own lives, might supply a special subject : but God in His Infinity, and in His Love as manifested in Christ Jesus, these are the subjects that we love more and more devotedly the oftener we contemplate them. There will be no difficulty in finding examples in David's sweet music for our adoration ; scarce a day's service is without such examples, and herein lies the secret of his deep spirituality, and the delight which Christians feel in the Hebrew King's devotions. Oh may it be so with me also ! may my soul continually recur to this holy and blessed exercise with new zeal and love !

O Lord Jesus Christ, let Thine Infinite Love fill my whole heart, and make me to dwell before Thee in spirit, worshipping Thee not only for all I want, and all I receive, but for Thine Eternal glory, and Thy Truth's sake, because Thou art He to Whom the Angels cry, " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Thee, Hallelujah. Amen."

DAY XX.

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto Thee."—PSALM cii. 1.

MEDITATION.

ONE of the most gracious names by which God is named unto us is that of the God that heareth and answereth prayer.

But in order that prayer may be answered, it must be such prayer as God approves ; and how, we may ask, are we to learn to pray such prayer ? Saying prayers and praying are not by any means synonymous ; and there are few trials greater to the really earnest Christian, than his difficulty of combining the spirit with the act of prayer as often as he would. The wise and holy have left us many calls to prayer, instructions how to pray, manuals of prayer, and many other guides, helps, and exhortations upon this subject : we read them till we know them by heart, we use their manuals diligently—but, alas ! we find ourselves falling again and again into a mechanical reading or repetition of their contents : and when we would cast aside set forms, and pray in our own words, these come languidly, and after a few attempts fall again into formality and repetition. Even our interest in the prayers of our Church services is interrupted by intervals of mechanical utterance, and lifeless joining with the congregation. Besides the great misery of preoccupied or wandering thoughts, these intervals of deadness and stiffness in prayer have grieved full many a loving, ardent heart, devoted in its determination to serve the Lord, and

ready to cut off the hand or foot that offendeth, if so it might obtain the inestimable blessing of warmth and readiness in prayer. Perhaps this blessing is, though inestimable, not so indispensable as is imagined. Perhaps the soul that lies prostrate at the foot of the Cross and says, I cannot pray, is not less lovingly looked upon by its Lord, than that which fluently details its infirmities, sufferings, and desires.

Fervent indeed our prayers must be—fluent they need not. The most blessed kind of prayer of all is that that has no words :

“ Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear.”

Prayer is the desire of the heart, and its expression ; not always in *words*, as we have just said. If the first exist, the second will generally follow : it will always perhaps be more laboured in some cases than in others, but come it will. Let us not, however, mistake the desire to pray simply as a necessary part of Christian life and duty for that desire to pray, which is prayer—which is feeling after God, and looking up to Him. If we do so take the former for the latter, we may indeed be surprised at the dearth of warmth and expression in our souls. The first is a mere acknowledgment that men ought to pray, and may exist without any real desire for help or grace, or consciousness of need. But the other is the strong misery that finds imperfect and inadequate utterance, by reason of infirmity. This is the wish to pray that is, doubt we not, accepted by Him “ Who knoweth our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking,” and of which we have already said, that where it exists, the power of utterance is sure to follow, in a greater or less, but in a *sufficient* degree.

Still, however, as it is a very great help in attaining it to follow certain rules, and as many who find all forms insufficient are yet compelled to use them, because they do not know how to pray without them, I will try some that have been recommended to me.

1st. To learn much of the Bible and of the Liturgy by heart.

2ndly. To practise breaking off occasionally in using a form of prayer, to introduce my own special desires in Scripture words, and in those of the Liturgy as they occur to me.

3rdly. To pray occasionally in Scripture words, only breaking off into my own words in the same way.

4thly. To pause sometimes in prayer.

5thly. Never to be long alone without trying to pray, be it but a few sentences, using my own, or Scripture words—upon everything I have in my heart, or am about to undertake, or undergo. There was a mother once, who, before entering a room where her family were assembled, would pause and pray to have her words “shielded with pure and peaceable wisdom,” while among them. What could not she tell of constant habits of prayer?

There was One once Who spent whole nights in prayer to God, and Who, when asked, “Lord, teach us to pray,” gave us the one perfect prayer upon which we may model all our prayers.

He “ever liveth to make intercession for us,” and the Holy Spirit also prayeth for us “with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

That there is a very rich treasury of prayer to be found in the Psalms every one must have observed : but the 53rd, 56th, and several other chapters of Isaiah ; the prayers of David, Solomon, Nehemiah ;

13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John ; the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians ; the 11th and 12th of Hebrews ; the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, and many other passages of Scripture, if learned by heart, will readily suggest, and even form, fervent and spontaneous mental prayers. So will also many verses of hymns, and even the application of Scripture words to sacred music, show sometimes in a new light how easily they form a prayer.

It is needless to add how little difficulty we ought to feel with a Liturgy like ours, combining large scope and ready flow with brevity and moderation, which (like the law that governs the movements of a planet) check nothing of the free grace of its course, but render all eccentricity impossible. Open Thou mine eyes, O Lord, to perceive the wondrous gifts Thou hast given us in Thy Law. Teach me to pray unto Thee, as I am therein taught to do. Make me thankful for the aids granted unto me. Yet do thou add, above all, Thy Holy Spirit, to fill me with that fervent desire of Thy Grace, and deep sense of my own exceeding sinfulness, to which Thou wilt grant both utterance in prayer, and acceptance of that prayer. Let the spirit of prayer be with me, and let me use all diligence to live in a habit of prayer. So shall I live ever as in Thy Presence, and daily worship Thee more and more until I come unto Thy Kingdom. Oh hear this my cry, Lord Jesus ! Amen.

DAY XXI.

"He spread out a cloud to be a covering, and fire to give light in the night season."—PSALM CV. 38.

MEDITATION.

THIS miraculous Guide and Defence of the Israelites, which, while giving light to them, was a cloud and darkness to their foes, will form not the least instructive of the many lessons we learn from their history. The whole of their journeyings is indeed a full and beautiful type of the history of Christian Churches, and the Apostles frequently lead us to recognize and take home the analogy between their blessings and trials and our own.

Nor need we look very far for the application of the passage before us. The Israelites were led by a cloud; the Christian is told to expect tribulation. The Israelite saw in the cloud his Light and Defence. St. Paul says that "they were all baptized in the cloud." The Christian sees in the hour of dismay his Lord and Saviour near unto him, and that which to all beholders seems like a darkness that must overwhelm him, is to him Light in the Lord. How many Christians who, like the Apostles on Mount Tabor, "feared as they entered into the cloud," have come out therefrom with a clearer knowledge of Christ's glory than they had before, and a more vivid and living faith "in the Resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come!"

It would be folly to expect that we can escape tribulation. If man were not born unto trouble, we are told that we must "through much tribulation enter

into the kingdom of God;" and supposing that we never know the agony of seeing the grave receive our most beloved ones—never suffer loss of property—incur unjust blame—nor awaken enmity, our own sinful hearts, and weak failing bodies, will not let us escape the lot of man. Suffer all men must, and suffer they must especially expect to do, whose Lord was made perfect through suffering, and gave Himself for an ensample that they should follow His steps. There was indeed in the lives of His immediate followers much danger, and much pain incurred by the very confession of His Name; and not many centuries since the upholders of a purer form of worship—the readers of His Word—were ever and anon the victims of relentless persecution and ungovernable hatred. Such is happily no longer the case in our own land: we might almost say that it is very rarely the case in our own quarter of the globe. Covert persecution, especially among the poor, no doubt still exists among us, but it consists chiefly in annoyance and dislike, and it is no longer at the peril of life or limb that we "subscribe with our hands unto the Lord." Our danger is in fact rather the other way; there is so much profession of religion on all sides, and it is really the actuating principle of so much larger a portion of society than it once was, that we are tempted to believe ourselves religious, and to be willing to be thought so, too easily—to lose sight of the real distinctness and individuality of Christ's religion and its peculiar demands of PERSONAL character, under the assurable contemplation of our own much increased pleasure in social religion.

Fear is not for this, however, a shaft lost from the quiver of the enemy of our souls. He who used to snare the weak in faith by representing the terrors of

the martyr's fate attacks us with the threat of lost popularity, and points to the "many troubles" which, in sacred as well as in profane history, seem to fall heavily upon the sons of God. But while he speaks of the cloud, he knows nothing of the Light within the cloud. He sees the constant worshipper in the sanctuary come there again and again, to lay some loved one in the grave under its shadow ; he sees the never vacant seats filled many a time and oft by forms robed in the deep mourning, and faces veiled in the sadness, that tell of torn and grieving hearts, but he does not see the Hand they see in every trial, nor hear the Voice they hear saying unto them, "Fear not, I will be with you." He cannot understand the deep sense of comfort these words bring to them, nor how they can so meekly and cheerfully lift up their hearts and say, "God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea."

In the midst of wrong and injury, of pain, misery, suspense, depression of all personal kinds, amidst the yet darker hours of a national calamity, they are still the same. Still, though the cloud be such as to shut them from all ordinary comfort, joy and peace, they have therein Light—the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, with Whom they suffer, with Whom they trust to live. Still patient and tranquil, active and devoted, conscious of the honour of being made like unto Him, and permitted to bear the cross after Him, they are undismayed, though sorely tried ; for every trial brings their hearts nearer to Him ; in every cloud they see His Light, and hear His voice saying " Lovest thou Me ? "

O may I, when clouds overtake me, hear that

blessed Voice, and answer, “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee;” “speak, for Thy servant heareth?” Yea, let me enter into the cloud, if I may then attain unto a truer knowledge of Thee, a deeper love, a higher, firmer faith.

Let me in every sorrow draw nearer unto Thee, nearer unto the foot of Thy Cross ; for thence, out of the Darkness that overspreads the whole earth, streams the Light that lightens me in the cloud. There is a deeper and holier joy in prayers and penitence there than swells even the most bounding song of thanksgiving in prosperity—nay even

“Sooner than where the stars of Christmas burn,”¹

may we find comfort and support in the clouds that shroud Mount Calvary. From them we see the same Light that is to be “a Light unto our feet and a lantern unto our paths,” “to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Amen, Amen.

DAY XXII.

“He satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”—PSALM cvii. 9.

MEDITATION.

IF Christ be the manna of our souls—if He be the staff of life to our spiritual nature—if “whosoever eateth of this bread shall have everlasting life”—if “he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life,”—hear my prayer, O Lord Jesus, and bind me closer to Thyself. Thou that satisfiest the

¹ Good Friday. Keble.

empty soul, and fillest the hungry soul with goodness, make my heart Thine, that my affections may indeed be filled with Thee, and not fixed in vain worship upon "cloud-built idols of this lower air." Let me ever bear in mind the "passing away" nature of the best treasures in this world, and seek to make Thee my only treasure and my chief good. There is, even in this world, an abundant rest from the cares and harassing anxieties of this life for those who fix their hearts and minds on Thee, and desire ardently to be more and more filled with Thine image, and conformed thereunto. When we are oppressed with anxiety, distressed with pressure of positive misfortune, or perplexed how to act in difficult circumstances, we have no temptation to lose sight of the "crushing cares" that waylay us in every earthly blessing, and at such moments we truly feel that in God is our only good, unmixed with ill. My dear parents may rejoice in their children and be thankful to possess them, yet how truly are we but "careful comforts" to them! causing them incessant watchfulness and fears for our bodily health and safety—and besides these, constant anxiety lest the minds they have so carefully educated, the souls they have so tenderly trained, grow frivolous, careless, worldly-minded, selfish, or unfeeling, preferring ease or folly to religion and truth. Nor is this an isolated case; every good brings its care, and even such smaller blessings as may scarcely seem to do so, pall upon the sated appetite, and cease to please: their sting is loss of zest and interest—they cannot "fill the soul." There is no argument more forcible or convincing of the immortality of the soul, than this her constant desire after some "better thing"—some more perfect and lasting good than is to be found in

any thing or person upon earth. This panting after the Infinite and Inexhaustible, which is manifested by the speedy disgust man feels with unreal joys and limited knowledge—whether in a state of barbarism or of civilization—has been to the inquiring minds of all ages either a difficulty or a solution : a difficulty to those who either knew not of, or denied, the doctrine of man's immortality, and of a future state—to those who knew and believed all of religion that had been vouchsafed to mankind, or had followed the light of natural religion,² a blessed solution of the difficulty they had found in reconciling man's complex nature with his subjection in common with other animals to the law of death.

To us, long since, the glorious Child is born ; to us, long since, the belief in our immortality and future state has become a part of our very lives—an awful consciousness that we can neither limit nor lay aside. Nor dare we forget that every time we experience that sense of emptiness in life's best pleasures, and of pain mingling with life's greatest happiness, we are hearing a word from Heaven, saying, “ Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

We know what these were—we know how he was instructed to look to the Lord his strength, his great salvation, and to cry aloud for the instruction and comfort of all future believers, “ He satisfieth the

² Acts xvii. 26-28.

empty" longing "soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." "When I awake up after His likeness, I shall be 'satisfied' with it."

Oh, glorious prospect, to be filled with Christ's image! Oh ! let my soul be indeed hungry, ardent in her desires after Thee, O Lord God, and grant unto me to be satisfied with Thy goodness. Amen.

DAY XXIII.

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His dwelling so high, and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?"
—PSALM cxiii. 5.

MEDITATION.

HERE is a sublimity in this verse—in the expression "and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven"—which immediately arrests our attention. In this case, as in many others, brevity is more eloquent than any amplification could be.

"The heavens" form the grandest object in nature, and the image or type of that Heaven which is the highest object of our hopes—God "humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven."

But we must not forget the next words, "and earth," for they concern us very nearly. There is no truth perhaps in which we all confess our belief more willingly with our lips, and deny it more strenuously in our lives, than this of God's actually noticing and caring for all we do or neglect to do.

That we do not heartily believe it is evidenced by our conduct ; we *do* behave as if we believed that man could see us and judge of us by our actions—but we do

not behave as if we felt that we were never unobserved by God.

That He sees the heart at all times is another and a distinct part of the subject, yet not far separated ; for he who desires to be free from human supervision that he may do wrong, forgets at one and the same time that God would behold the action, and that He sees even now the desire. All things are clear and open before His eye.

When heathens taught their children the high code of honour which recognized in the conscience of man a bar to every base covert action, to lying cowardice, and taking ungenerous advantage of another, they pointed only to the reflected beam from the mirror, not knowing the Light that gave it birth.

But now Light is come into the world, and all that seek to do right come unto the Light, that their deeds may be made manifest, not as perfect, but as “ wrought in God.” Surely I would not be of those who hate the Light, neither come unto it.

Let me then “ consider my ways,” and see if there are no habitual sins in which I indulge as too small to meet my earthly ruler’s eye, or to be judged of God. Is there no slackening in my daily work when the stimulus of human praise or blame is withdrawn ? Is there no stooping from the high laws of honour when opportunity offers safety from discovery ? Is there no tyranny over those who live with me, and are inferior in age or station, or are more gentle and yielding ? Is there no habitual evasion of, or disobedience to, some rule which I dislike, and consider interfering and unnecessary ? no murmuring to those who are also under authority, whereby I unsettle their obedience also ?

Many, many times have I committed all these things,

and have never thought of calling them sins, or even faults—or if I did, excused myself that “people who give absurd orders cannot expect to be obeyed.” “If you are always told of a thing, you never do it.” “There is no harm in talking of it; we all think it a great shame, and talking is no worse than thinking.” “If people are hard upon me, it is fair I should be hard upon others.” I need not tell myself how low and poor even in morals and logic such reasoning is. I know, now that I consider; how wrong it must be in the sight of God ; how mad and foolish it is of me to suppose that all these unreckoned faults are not sins to be accounted for. *I* may consider them as advantages improved, tyranny eluded, or power gained. Be the rule of man over me wise and just, or foolish and unfair, conciliatory, or irritating, loving or provoking to wrath ; yet these acts of habitual rebellion and selfishness are acts of rebellion towards God, “Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and earth.” Oh ! if He “chargeth His angels with folly,” with what will He, at the last day, charge me, if I wilfully retain any such presumptuous sins as these ?

These are all positive acts of sin—surely I cannot imagine that He is blind to them, though I may deceive men into believing that I do not commit them, or do so by a genuine mistake or inadvertence. I cannot doubt that by Him every act is noted, since unto Him all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Him no secrets can be hid.

We may elude the watchful care set over us ; we may treat as unworthy of our dignity the restrictions and commands laid upon us ; we may affect to think that they were not given in earnest ; we may pretend to forget or to misapply them,—but we must not forget

that God knows all our little narrow feelings, and will call upon us to account for our doings.

The most trifling *habitual* sin is an awful weight to the soul. When I recollect my habitual rebellion, in heart and in deed, to known commands human and divine,—when I consider my continual selfishness and tyranny over others, the capricious fitful moods to which I require others to conform, the deep love of leading which excites these moods, the self-abandonment to ill-humour or sullenness in one company, changed for smiles and urbanity at the appearance of a new member,—I feel that I have much, much unrepented of, besides the more commonly recognized sins—much that I like not to remember God humbleth Himself to behold.

This is not the place for speaking of that temper of mind which we should have towards those who watch over us, and those who live with us, nor of the knowledge of God as to the sins of our heart—such, in fact, are not our subject now. We all know and believe that He sees the germs of great crimes in the heart long before they manifest themselves in action, and that He sees also the disobedience, indolence, pride, or petulance, that is our besetting sin.

But we are apt, strangely apt, to believe that He does not notice the “trifling sins” springing from these roots—that such acts as we have considered to-day are nothing—not worth mentioning, and certainly not large enough for man to discover or God to behold. When shall we believe that “the very hairs of our head are numbered?” that to the infinite and eternal God, Heaven is beneath Him, but nothing is small?

Oh, my Lord God! I fall down before Thee to confess the manifold continual sins that I have indulged myself in without considering them to be sins. I also confess all unconscious habits of sin which I may have con-

tracted ; teach me to discover, avoid, and repent of them. Let me never again do aught, saying that no man shall see it, and that it is no sin in Thy sight—surely Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Oh ! let me not deceive myself, but let me return unto Thee, fasting and praying thus : “ Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Oh ! give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.” For Jesus Christ’s sake, let me never forget that Thou humblest Thyself to behold the things that are in Heaven and earth. Amen.

DAY XXIV.

“ It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man.”—PSALM cxviii. 8.

MEDITATION.

SO plain and evident a statement would appear to require no enlarging upon—no explanation. Every Christian heart, it should seem, could easily make the application thereof to its own circumstances. And we doubt not that in real and deep distress every Christian heart does so, and that even to the habitually thoughtless the presence of real danger or dismay instantly suggests the only Refuge.

The most hardened Atheist calls upon God in the hour of horror and despair, and though he qualify his appeal with the words “ if there be a God,” he knows and feels that there is one, and that in Him alone is safety to be found. We then, who habitually confess the Lord to be God, are still more certainly and

inevitably led to trust in Him, as our only Help in time of need ; yea, though we are often too careless and indifferent at other times—cold as to His glory—dead to His Love—and deaf to His constant demand “Give me thy heart.”

Yes ! we who know that there is none other name to flee to for safety—and yet more, for salvation, have too often in the hour of prosperity set up other gods, and bowed ourselves unto them, nor given our whole heart to God. Man, and the opinion of man, and the praise of man, have been our idols. Intellectual ambition, and love of excellence in some distinguished walk of life, has perhaps been our first object—or a meaner taste, the desire of riches, or love of ease and self-indulgence, or thirst for amusement, has ruled our thoughts, and man has applauded our efforts, and predicted our success, and we, flushed and excited, have gone on our way rejoicing, placing our confidence in man, and in his willingness to gratify our vain and exhaustless desire of reward and praise, speaking well of us as long as we do good unto ourselves. But what can man and his applause do, if Sorrow bring us word that this is not our home, or Pain lay a heavy hand upon us, and say from the Lord, “Be still then, and know that I am God ; I will be exalted in the earth ?” Our skill and talent, our wisdom and experience, our competitors and admirers, what are they all to us then ? Dead branches that cannot support us.

Or perhaps Caprice has been our besetting sin. This fault is hardly ever *aimless* and purely fantastic, it is Vanity—generally the vain empty love of taking the lead, which, while common to dwarfish minds who have no other chance for notice and distinction, ensnares also full many a brighter spirit, young and

impatient perhaps to lead—wary of being led—and ready to affect any amount of fickleness, provided only it can make others follow. This fault, which is one very rarely mentioned, perhaps seldom recognized as a fault at all, requires the greatest care to detect and eradicate it. All faults are not “young sins,” but there are many that literally are such,—and this one is certainly the germ of that fatal Vanity, Flirtation, in both sexes, especially in women, which ruins so many fair prospects and destinies that Heaven had smiled upon. This form of Caprice—this desire of praise from man, or rather of influence with him—this putting our confidence in our power of leading others—is to be observed in very young girls. It is, in fact, composed of precisely the same ingredients as the Caprice of larger growth, which is called Flirtation, and which, as we all know, is Vanity and Love of Power combined with shallow feelings.

Real Fickleness is instability—a want of power and balance in the mind. The counterfeit employed by Caprice exhibits itself in the very young girl by a restless or moody discontent with every plan and pursuit, every walk, ride, or conversation in which she is not the first; it affects a burst of high spirits now and then “to carry the outworks,” and assume the lead by starting some new object or topic—not simply for the sake of variety, which is a public service, but to make others follow her; and as soon as they are all interested, and some becoming observable for skill or success, she is afflicted with fatigue or loss of interest, and will be the first to propose another change—to be followed by another and another. Unhappy temper, that always must be the first to turn, as its only chance of being first at all! What wonder that this wilful fickleness

unheeded assumes in the girl a little older the more hateful form of heartless flirtation? Mistaking her own happiness as before, and placing it all in her own power over man, she no sooner is pleased and sees that she interests, than she quickly changes her tastes, and leaves the person to whom she had been all smiles in amaze at her sudden coldness, her absence, her pre-occupation, and above all at her ready flow of conversation to-day with the very persons she slighted yesterday. But there is no need to go on, too well does the Flirt know how to flirt—too soon may the heart apparently free from that sin now be betrayed into it if it remember not our text, “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man.”

It is better, therefore, to trust in the Lord, than to make an idol of human opinion, human favour and popularity. Be our wand ever so potent, it will never make us truly blessed to value it unduly, and use it unworthily. It is true some persons are born to exercise much influence over others, and will always find many too ready to be influenced. But let us be assured of one thing,—if this gift be not ours, neither Caprice nor Flirtation will give it; and if it be, it is, like all others, an awful responsibility—a talent to be accounted for at the last day.

It would seem like levity to enumerate here some of the purposes to which this gift is often applied; but the words “setting the fashion” will convey to the mind a great number of varied applications. There are some persons who can, almost unconsciously, in dress, manner, conversation, learning, politics, and even in religion, set a fashion. They are deeply responsible for the fashions they set, and as responsible beings let them consider their influence, and its consequences.

Having now considered those who love to lead—those who do lead, let me consider the case of those who are easily led. Some of the most beautiful and engaging qualities of our nature, trustfulness—reverence—submission—gentleness—enthusiasm, are richly found in those characters who, not perhaps easily led by *any one*, are too ready to place their confidence in man, if his position, wisdom, or holiness of life seem to warrant their doing so. Much to be loved and valued is this truly great appreciation of greatness and goodness in others. Woman especially is nought without it—her nature is to confide, and she wrongs her nature if she affects to do more or less. To confide in her own strength alone is to do less ; to confide in man more than in God, to do more than her nature bids, than her duty allows.

All indeed will find that the arm of flesh must and will fail them, if they cling to it ; it will forsake them, be paralyzed, or snatched away. Happy then are they who from the dawn of youth have fought alike against their over-confidence in man, and their self-confidence, and have placed their whole trust in God, knowing that they that trust in Him shall not be ashamed. What, oh ! what in the Day of Judgment will it avail us to have worshipped the best of mankind—to have cast ourselves devotedly at his feet, and have even died to do him honour, to have made of him a Jugger-naut ? What will it avail us that we could lead at will

“ From grave to gay, from lively to severe ; ”

that our opinions or our words were watchwords ; that our smiles were autocrats, and our wishes laws ; that all men spake well of us and followed in our paths ?

Will these things prove us to have been of the chosen generation—of the true Israel—of the children of God ?

“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” Let us not therefore conclude popularity to be either a test of our safety, or a *proof* of our danger ; still less then let us count it as our chief good. Lift up my heart unto Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ ; in Thee is my trust, oh, cast not out my soul ! Help me to place all my trust and confidence in Thee, Thee only, owning that there is none other Name but Thine. Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee. Oh ! let me ever remember that it is better to trust in Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, than to put any confidence in man. Keep me Thine evermore. Amen, Amen.

DAY XXV.

“Thou art my portion, O Lord : I have promised to keep Thy law.”—PSALM cxix. 57.

MEDITATION.

IF the Psalmist could thus express himself, what should be the language of the Christian ? If he who saw afar off the sacrifice of his Lord called Him his portion, owned that he had promised to keep His law, what should we say who have been baptized in His Name, and have accepted our part of the covenant sealed with His blood ? Have not we promised to keep His law ? Have we not sworn to be His, by a solemn vow which leaves no taste, no feeling, no part, no power unpledged to Him ; but binds heart, mind, soul, and strength to this our “reasonable service ?” Yes, we indeed are His by a solemn promise. Every one who cometh to be baptized enters into a covenant

indissoluble, and receives grace, without which he cannot even comprehend, much less act upon, his part therein. True, I was not baptized upon my own convictions, brought thither by my own tears of repentance, nor by the power of my own faith, but that faith and that repentance are the work of the Holy Spirit ; and since I was laid in Christ's arms, ere I yet knew to ask "what mean ye by this service?" He will confirm unto me that same Holy Spirit, working in me faith and repentance, kindling in my soul the blest assurance of His forgiving love, and will receive me at last into His Church Triumphant, as here into His Church Militant, if only I remain His faithful child, soldier, and servant unto the end. Such glorious promises being mine, I may well say, "Oh ! think upon Thy servant as concerning Thy Word, wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust." Such is the language of a soul that desires to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto holiness, that perceives in Christ her Saviour and her refuge, and ardently desires to be filled more and more abundantly with the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier—of a soul to whom in her religion, as in her mental studies, it is not enough to know facts, but she must be enabled to draw comfort, instruction, and support from these facts ; and more than this, to find in them rules of action also.

If then such is, or should be the language of any soul, let me examine myself how far my life agrees with the covenant entered into for me—with the convictions I express in this verse—and with the example of my blessed Lord. In my baptism it was promised for me that I should believe, perform, and renounce. If my belief or faith is a living faith, a saving faith, I shall indeed be anxious to perform God's holy will,

and renounce the world, the flesh, and the Devil. But though I renounce them, they will not so easily renounce me ; again and again will Satan use the indolence and self-indulgence of my nature, and the temptations to worldliness which are deep-buried therein, to draw me back from my profession, and to make me fall.

One of his most frequent and powerful means of doing this consists in exciting discontent. It seems but a little thing to own that our fortune and our fate are not perfect—that others have more riches, more advantages ; then comes with this admission an admixture of longing for a better share of earth's good gifts—an anxious glance at the fate of others, a repining look at our own—a settled discontent of heart—an occasional fit of disgust at others for being more fortunate than ourselves. Unquiet thoughts drive out thoughts of prayer, doubts of God's justice and love dim our faith, and finally extinguish it, and Satan is well pleased. Let not such be my course. Let me not set my heart upon temporal things, but strive in my daily life to dwell upon such things as are pure, lovely, of good report ; to be calm from vexations and anxieties ; free from vain restless longings after good denied me ; still and tranquil amid an excited and exciting world ; sure and stedfast in every duty, looking hopefully towards Him Who is my portion, Who alone can do unto me according to His Word, Who alone can work in me that which is wanting, and assist my feeble efforts by His powerful aid, as the mother supports her infant's steps, which his eye and his limbs are too unpractised to direct aright. Let me but fix mine eyes upon Him, and own my deep unworthiness. He is ever ready to

say, I am thy portion, I am thy salvation, "It is I, be not afraid." And if He is my portion, of whom should I be afraid? If He is my salvation, whom then should I fear? What can separate me from Him?

What can I need more than this? What can be happiness compared to this? God is my portion, in Him I have all things. Yea, though sorrow, sickness, want, anxiety, human anger, scorn, fall upon me, I will not doubt, for He is my portion. Though temptation, discontent, murmurings assail me, I will be stedfast in Him. I have promised to keep His law. So work in me, Lord, both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure, that I may ever be of those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy stedfast fear and love, and whom Thou never failest to help and govern. Be Thou thus with me in all things, O Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY XXVI.

"Make Thou Thy servant to delight in that which is good, that the proud do me no wrong."—PSALM Cxix. 122.

MEDITATION.

WHEN we judge one another, we generally fall into error, and do each other wrong. But he that delighteth in that which is good hath a sure defence against all proud misjudgment. These words have a very wide significance, and will bear to be made watchwords of our life. It is the mark of a great mind to seize a good principle and carry it out, even in apparently indifferent circumstances. This does not issue in the bringing down of great things to small, which is the sign of

low and limited comprehension, but in the viewing every small thing in the same spirit as great things. Such a mind does not on contemplating a mountain consider it as “a big molehill,” but recognizes in the habits of the mole the work of the same Creator Who maketh the mountains to tremble.

Thus, then, we will take this present verse, and consider it not only as applying to those happy and well-poised souls who really “delight in God,” who are devoted to Him in heart and life—whose social religion leads them to all good works for His sake and their brethren’s—whose personal religion enshrines Him as the mainspring of life, as the one only Good, deep in their penitent hearts,—to whom He is all in all,—but also to those among them who, intellectually gifted, find delight in much that is good, for very love of beauty and perfection.

It is not necessary to love music, for instance, only in sacred music ; we may love that which is good in art for itself, thoroughly, fondly ; a picture well painted, secular music well ordered, sculpture, architecture, science, poetry, languages, criticism, for their own sakes as being good. There is no fear that if we really love God, we shall idolize these foretastes of that perfect knowledge, for which our thirst is so ardent that we need to remind ourselves that it is to be only a secondary joy of Heaven. There is no fear that with this thirst, though it ought to be kept in subjection to our hope of yet “better things ;” there is no fear that we idolize the gleams and glimpses of knowledge enjoyed by even the wisest and most gifted here. The intense love of knowledge cannot rest contented with anything short of Him in Whom is all perfection, all doubts resolved, all partial truths harmonized and verified.

No, the more we do know here, the more we must love Him, else we are pursuing shadows and not truths.

There can be nothing but advantage in cultivating our minds, if we do it with this view of knowledge. It is good for us all to open, enlarge, and expand our mental range as much as we can. Letting in light drives out spectres? and vanity, conceit, prejudice, harsh judgment of others, self-deception, bigotry, are all spectres which pale instantly before the letting in of any light, even if it be not evidently directed upon the corner where they are skulking. But while reading uproots false notions, it strengthens true ones. The more we see of foreign worship, the more we value our own Church, though we also see more clearly by contrast with others such weak points as belong to our own nationality, and not to her constitution. Let me then sedulously cultivate my mind, my general understanding, the knowledge of the history I and my generation are *living* (do we not all remember the keen delight of first feeling that we had lived during events that would be history?), the art or science for which any facility is thrown in my way, the more the better—not as mere occupation, but as supports to the tendrils of my understanding, by means of which it may grow and look over the wall of prejudice, party, and self-engrossment.

There is so much to be learnt of God's government of the world not only in history, but in the more interesting parts of the study of language, with the knowledge of the progress of science, useful arts, and ornamental arts also, that one cannot wonder at the zeal with which some minds pursue these studies. History is indeed the recorded pulsations of the World's great

heart; all other kinds of information are veins and arteries supplied from and tributary to this source.

It is hazarded in a recent publication, that perhaps an affinity might be discovered in every nation, running through their music, architecture, sculpture, painting, and literature. It might have been added, language, dress, society, and history, and have been mentioned as a recognized fact.

Viewing information in this way, or viewing it as the record of human opinions, or even as "the history of human error," how vast a field is opened even to the young and unlearned! how immense to him who brings to the contemplation previous knowledge, habits of research and of careful analysis, and a wide, lofty, noble freedom from prejudice! A mind thus occupied will indeed be shielded frommisunderstanding, and from caring too much for human favour and applause.

But if we shrink from so wide a field, there is the deep study of music, the works of the never-weary pencil of great masters, or the delicate inflections of languages—of *language in languages*, with all its deep delight in varied accent and modulation, in characteristic stamp, and in perfect, liquidly-melodious vowels, the sounds of which recall the whole history of the people who spoke that tongue. Surely these studies are in themselves "good" for man, teaching him, if he read them aright, to look with greater awe and love than ever upon Him to Whom this wondrous complex variety of incident and interest is all open, and all under command; Who ruled the destiny and shaped the course of all those whose works we marvel at; Who gave us a heart and taste fitly formed to thrill with pleasure at their beauties and perfections—and not to pause there, but to stretch on, on to Himself, in Whom all is beauty. We can-

not fancy the “imitative arts” in heaven, any more than “the sword in myrtles drest ;” but we can imagine that the love of beauty, and even the heroic feeling will have scope, and nobler scope there.

Meantime we know that to admire and delight in that which is good is a temper of mind that we may *pray* for, always remembering that He Who is altogether lovely is, and must be, first and above all “that which is good,” and that all else must be valued by this standard. I will henceforth study with more zeal and completeness, having this sweet encouragement “to delight in that which is good.” Amen, Amen.

DAY XXVII.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

“My help cometh even from the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth.”—PSALM cxxi. 1, 2.

MEDITATION.

WHEN sorrows, large, heavy, and crushing, come upon us, we are told to “put our trust in the Lord,” and no doubt there is much kindness and wisdom in the advice ; but the heart that has never looked to God in small troubles will be far less able to profit by the counsel, than one which has always sought Him at all times. Sorrow makes us naturally look for aid where alone we may expect relief or consolation. Parents who never taught their children the name of God, yet shriek to Him to restore those children from their deathbeds to their arms ; and women who have hastily stowed their affections without one prayer to

Him Who alone can bless them, yet call upon Him in the agony of despair, if disappointment threaten to overcloud their fair hopes. Certainly, if we were all that we should be, we should seek God's help continually; and instead of listening to the simple prayer with which the fisherman commits his nets unto the sea with a half-surprised emotion, we should imitate his noble example of true faith, and in our daily life, in the house, the garden, the daily walk, we should undertake every kind of business and pleasure as he does, sitting on the edge of his dark boat on the dancing sea, the tremulous opal light of a winter sunset about him, and the assurance of God's Providence warm at his heart. The "fisherman of Galilee" might well be brought to our minds by such a picture, and a ready Amen to his prayers might fervently leap from our hearts.

Thus too will I do. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. I will look unto "the mountain of my God," the hill of Sion which He loveth; "early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Him, and will look up." There shall be no event, no duty of my life in which I fail to ask His help, so shall I find Him very present in trouble.

When temptation assails me, I will cry unto Him, for He will not suffer my foot to be moved.

When I labour for peace, and they make them ready to battle, then will I lift up mine eyes unto Him.

When in perils by the way, He shall preserve my going out and my coming in.

The same spirit runs through this day's Psalter service, so shall an uniform spirit of trust run through the great and the little events of my life. When I am about to enter society, be it a family party, or a mixed company, I will still lift up mine eyes for help to do

and say nought unbecoming my Christian profession, and to bear my part therein genially and pleasantly with quickness, tact, and good humour. If this is indeed the spirit in which I enter upon all things, nothing shall in any wise hurt me : I shall bear about me an armour of proof, fit to resist every danger, every temptation. And above all, when I find myself unable to pray as I ought, I will still cry aloud, “ Unto Thee will I lift up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.” The servants fed from the table of their oriental masters are a living image of ourselves, who stand waiting for the Bread of Life. If words fail us, let us lift up our hearts ; if our hearts fail us, let us lift up our eyes. Words will not fail us, our hearts will not fail us, for “ our help cometh even from the Lord, Who hath made Heaven and earth.” Amen.

DAY XXVIII.

“ As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.”—PSALM cxxxv. 15.

MEDITATION.

IT is often useful in reading passages that seem to point to a period in the world’s history, and a position of circumstances totally unlike our own, to pause and examine wherein consists the dissimilarity, and in what respects our times have the advantage over former ages. If this is useful in cases of general

truths, it is especially so in reading of judgments pronounced, reproofs administered, and warnings delivered. We easily say to ourselves, “If we had been in the days of our fathers, we had not done after their works”—let us examine then and see if there is really so immense a difference between their spiritual condition and ours, that we can by no possibility emulate them in their sins !

Let us take this text as a sample. The images of the heathen are but silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. It seems to be a strong case. We are not heathens—certainly not. We are Christians—baptized, and taught, and carefully educated Christians.

We do not worship images.

Not as personifying God—but what were the images of the heathen ?

Their gods—the representation of their divinities—the type, picture, or fiction then, of their chief good, of the most precious object of love and service.

Have we, in this sense, no graven images ? No silver and gold representations of what we most desire—most labour for—most prize—most honour and respect in others ? Is there nothing to which we all bow down in this England—which we reverence more perhaps than talent—more than station—more than virtue ? Is it not wealth—golden success ? Has not this a strange influence on the opinions which even the young, who are not conscious of loving money for its own sake, form of others ? Have we not almost habitually an excuse ready for the faults of the rich, which we have not for those of the poor ? Are we as much shocked when a poor labourer has an illness or an accident, as when the heir to broad lands is laid low by the same means ?—and yet does not the loss of health involve

much more to the young peasant than to the young laird? We are not contending that their *stake* in general matters is the same, or that distinctions of rank are an evil, but simply that the presence or absence of riches in the sufferer should not expand or contract our human sympathies.

Do we feel a repugnance to distinctions of rank where all are really equal—in the sanctuary?—in the presence of peril?—in the grave? Are we grieved that there should be, in cases where all are equally exposed to danger, a *first-class* and a *second-class* insurance for life? Is not life equally dear to all—and especially valuable to those who have others dependent on their exertions? If the answer be, that as their position is one of greater peril, so should the contingent compensation be less—we can only say that this appears to us to be false reasoning. But if we cannot alter existing evils, we can at least examine ourselves in this matter, and studiously avoid setting up wealth as an idol in our hearts. Let us not consider any of the appurtenances of wealth as necessary to us—as forming any thing like a claim to distinction, as standing in at all the same light and value as religion, honour, talent, goodness. Let us beware of looking at any one through a golden veil, and preferring him seen through that to his own self without it. For what he is, is real and true—the golden veil may melt in the sun, but the man will stand revealed, and that covering will no longer hide the blemishes, nor soften the asperities. One day we must all stand in the Light before which every thing that exalteth itself shall be abased and dispelled; when Lazarus shall stand revealed as Christ's, and Dives shall find no shelter in his purple and fine linen.

Let us then consecrate our purple and fine linen by

considering our riches as God's, not our's : then shall we find that the possession of riches does not make a Dives, any more than rags and disease make a Lazarus. Then shall we learn by constant self-denial to turn our riches into blessings to ourselves and others ; and ever avoid the condemnation of those who worship the work of their own hands. Grant unto me, Lord, the spirit to think and do always such things as are rightful ; that the good things Thou hast entrusted to my care be not wasted, nor turned into an occasion of falling, but may be ever doing good to all around me, and leading mine own heart and many others to praise and bless Thee, for all that Thou hast given me richly to enjoy. Let my treasure be indeed in heaven, and my heart there also, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

DAY XXIX.

"I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy works, that my soul knoweth right well."—PSALM cxxxix.
13.

MEDITATION.¹

OF all the human beings that exist upon this globe, there is not one who may not utter this note of praise. True there are many whom accident or disease, the lacerated nerve or wasting bone, condemns to days and nights of agony ; yet even they can all probably be thankful for intervals of ease, and can well remember the time when health and strength were theirs ; and

¹ In the following Meditation no attempt is made to pursue the theory of ideas, or to consider any thing more than our bodily structure.

however such a reflection may seem to aggravate their present sufferings, there is not the less cause for asserting that they are fearfully and wonderfully made,—that the curious human fabric so easily disturbed, yet so wonderfully preserved from countless dangers, and even when far gone in disease or cruelly mutilated, so capable of endurance, and even of recovery, asserts itself to be the work of an Almighty Hand.

But never, perhaps, does this truth seem more strikingly exemplified than when we look upon a person fresh in the bloom and active in the vigour of youth,—the pliant upright form, the graceful head, the fair, soft skin, brilliant eyes, and the glossy, abundant hair. Then the gay cheerfulness, the appetite for all that promises good-humour and pleasure, the light spirits that will not be depressed by trifling difficulties ; all these are engaging in youth, and shed an enchanting halo over its features. But if such are the charms that make youth the object of all eyes—the admired, the envied of all ages—too often, perhaps, the spoiled and flattered also, what should the feelings of the possessor of these honours be? Should it be vanity that inflates my heart when I see or hear how light and graceful, how bright and sunny a form and face are mine? Or if I hear it said that I possess this or the other attraction—that such and such circumstances are particularly becoming to me—that my riding, dancing, &c., are more than ordinarily good, may I forget to Whom I owe the light activity, the pliant, elastic limbs, the firm, fine muscles, and the general tone and pulse of health that make my actions look so well?—Or let us suppose another case. Perhaps no one has ever praised me for any such advantages. But my mind and heart are full of the eagerness of youth—my health

is seldom disturbed, my mental powers are excellent, and my countenance and manner are, I know, lively and agreeable, if not regularly handsome and distinguished.

Shall I then forget to consecrate unto God such means of pleasing as He has granted me? Supposing that I have, as the phrase is, "proved better-looking than was expected" of my plain childhood,—that my awkwardness is gone, and my whole appearance improved. Shall I see in this only a triumph over the predictions of my elders, and an excuse for being more vain than those who, having heard of their beauty from infancy, do not value it unduly? No. O my God, let me never forget that it is Thou who hast made me as I am for Thine own purposes! Let me fulfil Thy will. Let me be so much the more humble and watchful over myself for every cause I have to thank Thee,—that I am fearfully, wonderfully made, that my limbs and faculties are perfect, that I have all my senses, and that Thou hast endued me with health and comeliness. But what if I am not blessed with health? Am a constant invalid? Or frequently indisposed, and never able to join fully and freely in the pursuits and amusements of others? Can I then bless God that I am fearfully and wonderfully made? Yes; probably there are few more fervent or continual thanksgivings for the enjoyments permitted, or the sufferings averted, than those which are breathed from full many a couch of pain, from many hearts that would seem to ordinary observers to have a destiny all suffering and no enjoyment. Those who suffer often are frequently the nearest in heart to their God. Yet let me remember that habits of thankfulness and resignation are not the natural growth of sick-

ness and pain, but require to be cultivated by assiduity in prayer, self-denial, and humility. Let me, if by sickness or infirmity I am thus often reminded of my dependence upon Him, value and improve this my great advantage, nor cease to give thanks that some ill is averted from me, that some blessings are left to me, and above all, that I have so frequent a message from my Lord saying unto me, "Bear this, for My sake."

But perhaps I am of that numerous class who have to bear through life a yet heavier doom—the burden of personal peculiarity or deformity, the loss of a member or of a faculty, or the consciousness that one is disfigured for life and shut out from much of life's activity ; though with perhaps, all the health and spirit of enterprise that would enter with zeal into every kind of active pursuit or undertaking. None can truly know what this burden is but they who feel it. It is not so much the being denied such and such pleasures and occupations which makes the heavy cloud to persons so afflicted ; but it is—and here we speak particularly of the deformed and disfigured—it is the observation they excite ; the peculiar impression that they know they produce, the strangeness that they are well aware attends them every where, and in every movement. Shut out by conscience, if not by tacit convention, from every hope of life's purest, holiest joys ; denied the usual scope for affections not the less keen and glowing ; unfit for much of life's business perhaps—and pursuit certainly ; entering upon every fresh acquaintance with a repugnance incomprehensible to others, yet glad to lose, by sympathy in the interests of others, some of their weary self-consciousness ; irritable and sensitive by reason of that self-consciousness, what is there for them to take pleasure in ?

Oh ! much, much. If they remember that even they are of the Human Nature honoured by Christ's taking it upon Him. If they do but accept their position from the hand of Him Who loveth them and gave Himself for them. If they remember that even their bodies may be the Temples of the Holy Ghost. If they consider themselves as marked out by His Love, to bear His will and to perform it, in the special manner His Providence has seen fit to lay upon them. *Then*, though still feeling acutely all the privation, all the peculiarity, of their thorn in the flesh, they will find special mercies:—grace to resist the temptations to irritability and murmuring; opportunities for doing good for His sake; leisure to throw themselves more fully into the interests around them, however comparatively unoccupied in truth themselves. And if they have health to enjoy the free gifts of nature, and the deep delights of study,—if they have moreover a loving, kind-hearted family, a cultivated taste, and a love for all that is beautiful and true, only the keener from feeling how little of either they represent in person,—if their daily aim be to follow their risen Lord, and to act out the character of His soldiers and servants thus—

“ Faith is their firm, unswerving root,
Hope their unfading flower,
Fair deeds of Charity their fruit,
The glory of their Bower.”¹

they too will not cease to utter the thankful song, “I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,” even while they praise and magnify Him that their dear ones are not only wonderfully but beautifully formed, even while they look themselves with ceaseless desire to the time when they too shall

¹ Septuagesima Sunday. Keble.

"not all sleep, but all be changed," when this mortal shall put on immortality—when the faulty body shall be lost in the perfect likeness of God, and they shall join the Church above without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing, but shall glorify God for ever and ever. Amen.

Oh my God, whichever be my fate,—beauty, plainness, privation, or deformity,—only let it remind me of Thy Love in taking our nature upon Thee, in allowing our bodies to become the Temples of Thy Holy Spirit. Teach me to worship Thee in my spirit, soul, and body ; to be ready both in body and soul cheerfully to accomplish what Thou wouldest have done, and to be very courteous to, and tender of, those upon whom Thou hast set Thy seal of a personal burden. Teach me to bless Thee for my creation, for every special preservation, for my health, strength, and intellect, for my powers of exertion and endurance, for the whole round of my daily existence ; ever singing heartily—

"I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

DAY XXX.

"The Lord looseth men out of prison ; the Lord giveth sight to the blind."—PSALM cxlvii. 7.

MEDITATION.

THE whole of this Psalm is so beautiful, and so "fitly framed together," that it is difficult to select any one verse as especially to be considered. The cxlvth Psalm was in so high estimation among the Jews,

that they declared he could not fail to inherit the world to come who should recite it five times a day. But this one, the cxlvith, is perhaps to the Christian ear as beautiful, and as full of instruction. The very first verse opens with an apostrophe to the soul, full of devotional fervour most eloquently expressed ; then follow two verses deprecating the vain trust in an arm of flesh, be it in princes, or in any child of man ; for there is no help in them, no might, no power, to do all that the Lord God is described in the following verses as doing, in the work of creating, upholding, and restoring. The thoughts of man perish when the breath goeth forth. This does not refer to his soul, of the immortality of which David was well assured ; but to his thoughts of action and enterprise, whereby he would save himself or others from death.

But blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God, whose mighty works in creation are then enumerated in the fifth verse. His tender, providential care is the subject of the sixth and following verses, to which indeed our Saviour's own words to the disciples of John seem to refer, and to verify them.

“The Lord looseth men out of prison : the Lord giveth sight to the blind.” These are classed together as being two of the very highest mercies granted to us. Physically considered, they are indeed so. The loss of liberty and the loss of sight are the two heaviest of all losses, and in fact are therefore made the frequent types of spiritual ignorance.

There is no need to enumerate the texts in which these types are employed. It will be better to look into our own hearts and see if we, though baptized and thus called out of captivity and darkness, are still

wilfully blind to our privileges, still trusting to our union with Christ in baptism, without seeking duly to be renewed by His Holy Spirit ; still supposing that we have renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, because it was so promised for us that we by God's help would do.

Are we still blind ? Does the glare of present things still dazzle our weak sight ? Have we no eyes to see our Divine Saviour looking on us with pity and with love, and saying unto us, " My child, my pardoned child, draw near in faith ? " Have we no hearts to leap responsive to such a call, and to seek Him ; evermore preferring all things wherein we may discern Him, to any thing that tempts us to forget Him ?

Are we still blind ? Will we still forget that He loves us—watches us ; that no scene, no pursuit, can hide us from Him ? and will we persist in trying to let any scene or pursuit hide *Him* from *us* ? Oh, why not call upon Him to bless us in all we do and enjoy ! If we did but cultivate this precious habit, He would quickly open our eyes to see no pleasure in aught that we could not thus consecrate, and our hearts would be preserved from idolatry, even when surrounded by the most glittering scenes of earth.

This happy sense of God's presence as a reconciled and pardoning Father is known, and must be so, to all who are Christians in heart, and His in very deed and truth. But let not any be dismayed because they are less constantly alive to this peace than others. Let them not cease to seek Him because they do not yet discern Him as clearly as some others whose eyes have been longer opened to see His love, or whose dutiful hearts have grown up in the constant affection that baptized children should feel for Him Who hath so

loved them. There are some of His baptized children who are never blind ; but there are many who become so, for lack of care and for lack of prayer in those around their early path. But the Lord helpeth them that are fallen, and He will restore them ; some by sudden, some by gentle means—until their whole heart shall be His, and they begin to live unto Him, never ceasing, until they “see Him as He is” in His kingdom.

The whole of this day's Psalms forms a very good climax to the month's course of devotions and praises. There is no cry of sorrow or distress. The 144th Psalm is a burst of triumphant praise and thanksgiving for deliverance. The next begins, “I will magnify Thee, O God, my King : I will praise Thy Name for ever and ever,” and continues in a similar strain. The 146th, the one we have been considering, finishes the Morning Service with thanks for special mercies. The Evening Service then “takes up the wondrous tale,” and enumerates some of the glories of nature. The 148th Psalm calls upon Nature herself to rejoice and give praise ; the 149th gives us one of the most exulting hymns possible ; the 150th sums up the rest ; praising God for all His attributes which have been manifested and dwelt upon in the preceding Psalter,—His Holiness, His power, His noble acts, and His excellent greatness, calling for all kinds of music, as though all were too poor fitly to accompany His praise, and winding up at last with the universal and undying chorus, “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.”

DAY XXXI.

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."—
PSALM cl. 6.

MEDITATION.

THIS verse decidedly *needs* no comment. It strikes upon the ear at once as a magnificent summons to all mankind, and to the angels, as animated beings, also : a glorious crown and climax to the whole book of inspired devotion which we have now examined. Are then all mankind herein summoned? Not only the religious of the civilized world, but the whole of the human species? Yes, even the fallen and the degraded, the ignorant and the neglected, the heathen at home and abroad, the blinded followers of false religions, and the contemners of all religions, all, "young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the Name of the Lord." Yes, let us all draw near and praise Him, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being, "for we are also His offspring."

But are we alone included in this glorious summons? Ah, no! it is of vast significance. It calls not only upon man, in every varied stage and scene of life, from the highest cultivation to the deepest degradation, but also to the whole world of animal life, even the breathing, vegetable, if not the mineral world, to swell the mighty and eternal hymn, "Praise ye the Lord," and join the choral songs of the happy angels and redeemed ones in the Church on High. The more we look into this subject, the more it opens and enlarges upon our mental view. We know that every natural substance in the world contains animal life. The microscope is

daily showing to us more and more of the wondrous and apparently illimitable worlds of animal being which, as animalculæ and infusoria, feed upon and exist in even manufactured articles, and in those where it would have seemed to us impossible. Instead of allowing such discoveries to lead us impiously to suppose that man has had any share in producing such life, let us remember that all, all are called upon here to "praise the Lord." He alone is their Maker and their Lord. They are included in the cry, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Let us then, while taking the greatest and widest range for our mental view of the works of God that do in truth praise Him, not forget each to examine ourselves—to inquire each of our own hearts, "Are we *living* as well as singing to the praise of God?" Do we indeed eat and drink and do all to the glory of God? Is our conversation truly innocent and heavenly? Is the breath of our lips employed in His praise and in His service? Whether teaching or learning of those around us, whether consoling or congratulating them, whether giving advice or sympathy, whether holding simple, loving intercourse, or effecting important transactions—are we doing all to the glory of God? If the undulating vibrations of the air never cease to convey every word once uttered, do they teem with the words of praise? Oh! how glad a thought it would be that they bore ever, ever onwards a hymn of thanksgiving; it would be so if every thing that hath breath gave praise unto the Lord.

And, alas! it is only man whose voice is ever wanting or discordant—only man who causes the cry of pain, and wrong, and sorrow, to mingle and make discord with the sweet circling chorus!

"Man only mars the sweet accord."

How often shall we forget this? How long shall we neglect it? Lord, how long?

Perhaps we may proceed yet further, and, believing that the brilliant hosts of heaven consist of numberless suns and planetary systems, and supposing each sun and planet of such systems to be as densely peopled as our own earth, how vast, how grand, how yet more sublime the wide-embracing trumpet-call becomes:—praise the Lord! What if each far distant light which is revealed to us, first as an indistinguishable cloud of light, then as a star, be really a sun, surrounded by a perfect system of planets and satellites, and revolving with them round another sun in infinite space? What if those we have discovered be but a millionth part of those that will yet be discovered even from our earth? and what if these are each and all peopled with creation in all its productions, from the animalcule to the Intelligence, as is our own planet?

It matters little that the Intelligences there be in the form of some more or less perfect and exalted than our own type; it matters not whether they are beings that *we* should recognize as intelligent beings at all. There is no reason that man's form should prevail everywhere as the order selected to receive Intelligence. Clouds, flowers, gases might, if it so pleased their Creator, as easily have been the receptacle of soul and spirit; and whatever body had been so selected would have been, in virtue thereof, the highest type of creation in its own universe.

We know, indeed, that we are created in God's Image, and that the Son of God took upon Him our present form, and re-entered therewith into the courts of heaven: therefore we do not suppose any higher

type than our present form, mental and bodily, possible in a state of probation.

But we have no proof that the inhabitants of other spheres are in a state of probation ; have fallen, have been redeemed, or are the subjects of Revelation such as we possess. We know that God's mercies are over all His works, and we need not therefore perplex ourselves about the spiritual state of problematic worlds ; but we may well and wisely desire to look beyond our own bounded sphere of vision, and open the eyes of our mind to the stupendous grandeur of such a creation.

"New worlds on worlds arise,"

filled with creatures capable of joining in the eternal choral strains, "Glory be unto Thee, O Lord."

The heart fails to take in the whole glory of the thought ; but the eye, wandering over the deep blue of night, from star to star, and longing vainly for a telescopic power to see and know more than all aids have yet brought to it, rests not till it in fancy beholds numberless systems, each as wonderful as our own, fulfilling their destined course ; bearing with them in their rapid flight through space, myriads of created things, varied in form and nature, but all living and uttering the praise of their Maker, from the living, loving, intelligent soul, to the dim-existented zoophyte or infusoria ; every life of all those lives as perfectly known, perfectly ordained, as the position of the central sun, or suns, to the Infinite Mind that sees and knows all ; to whom time and space are not, and to whom, therefore, progression is not, save as in itself, a creation. Surely if the stars are inhabited, it must be to the glory of Him Who calleth them all by their names ! We cannot indeed say why He should have selected our earth as the scene of the wonderful history of man's

fall, and of the offering of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We do not know if other worlds have needed a Mediator, or have any share in the sacrifice once offered on our earth. We dare not say to either of these questions, It is impossible. Nor is this the place to argue for or against them ; but we may and we ought to inquire whether either opinion affects religious belief.

Certainly our faith in the infinity, wisdom, and power of God ought to be firm enough to withstand, on the one side, the doubts expressed by some persons whether He could rule so many varied worlds, or place appropriate inhabitants in spheres of density and temperature most unlike ours, or would have chosen the earth to be the scene of Revelation, if the other planets were inhabited : and on the other, the vague wonder felt by those who hold that the whole stupendous, prodigious system, our own part of it at all events, was produced solely for the advantage of our earth.

We surely ought, as sincere Christians, to feel that in either case He is glorified. Whether the vast orbs roll tranquilly through space, speaking of Him only by their days and nights in silence eloquent ; or whether from each and all rise countless strains of prayer and praise, with all the mingling melodies of nature, still, still to His glory must it be, for they are His Work.

But how, it may be asked, does this last view of the subject agree with Revelation ?

Revelation is silent upon it, and says nought either for or against it. Truth scientific and Truth revealed can never really be at issue. Both are granted to us by the same Hand. He is not a man ; with Him there is no variableness. We may imagine two lines to be

parallel, and may say they will never meet, but our eye may be deceived ; they may converge so slightly as to mislead the keenest vision, and far beyond our mortal ken they may find a common centre. Thus it must be with apparently conflicting truths, if truths they be. Thus let us receive as precious the facts that science reveals, satisfied that if they are *truths*, they cannot assail Truth. It is not necessary in order for statements to be reconcilable that we should be able to reconcile them now. God grant to us faith and humility now, and the fulness of knowledge hereafter !

But as the same God reveals to us His uncomputed worlds afar off, and His uncomputed worlds all around us (and that too by the agency of one and the self-same substance), let us, while indulging in the far-off contemplation of possible glories to be more fully revealed hereafter, not neglect our own little place in the infinite order, our own small niche in the universal temple. We are taught that while the very greatest efforts may be made to spread God's glory and worship over our own whole earth, we yet may even "eat and drink, and do all to the glory of God." Surely, then, in daily labour, daily temptation, self-denial, patience, tact, submission, exertion, charity, and adoration, I may answer the call, may hasten, as much as in me lieth, the time when His Knowledge shall cover the earth-as the waters cover the seas, and then if I neglect not my own microscopic place in the vast scale, I may fearlessly launch upon the ocean of telescopic probabilities, nor fear to follow humbly the daring flight of those whose acute and rapid minds have lately opened to us in familiar language the topics that engage them, and have admitted us to a generous share in their brilliant speculations. May the grand and ennobling subjects

thus brought before so many of the unlearned, fail neither with them nor with their learned and deep-thinking teachers to lead direct to God, in whom dwelleth all Light and all Perfection !

May each and all who gaze, whether ignorantly or intelligently, upon the starry vaults, look beyond, from the vast to the Incomprehensible, from the magnificent to the Perfect, from the immense to the Infinite. Amen.

NOONDAY MEDITATION I.

- "At evening, and in the morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly, and Thou shalt hear my voice."—PSALM lv. 17.
- "And it was about the sixth hour."—LUKE xxiii. 44.
- "Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour."—ACTS x. 9.
- "I must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."—JOHN ix. 4.
- "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."—JOHN xii. 35.

YES, it is even so : the day is in its prime, and begins even now to go down ; from the moment of perfection every earthly thing begins to decay, and in this it shows its earthliness, and impossibility of sustaining even the degree of perfection it is allowed to attain unto. Every day that reaches unto noon then begins to fade ; the tree that attains an hundred years, in still increasing vigour, then begins to die ; the man in the zenith of his intellect and power, the woman in the summer of her beauty and influence, begins to turn towards decay and loss. And the same fatality attends every human institution, every dominion, every nation or empire ; there is a culminating point in the history of each, and the summit attained, the descent immediately begins. Much eloquence has been lavished upon this condition of our nature, and its ramifications have been traced in all but the eternal elements of our present existence. It is not so in love, nor in religion, (nor, in the aggregate, of knowledge and wisdom,) because these are immortal, these are transplanted glories

of heaven, sent to earth for a time for our exceeding great advantage and delight : but it is true of all else ; and my heart avows it, and looks sadly upon it, and yet why sadly ? It is true that the child I delight in must, if it live, grow old, and plain, and infirm ; that the intellect I admire must wane and fail on earth, ere it be re-illumined in heaven, and that the face I love must lose its loveliness—yet not for this will I mourn. I will rather pray, that each night's moon might remind me, and each Midsummer-day remind me, how all fair things on earth do wax, and wane, and die ; that so I may fix my heart and hopes in heaven, and laying up my treasure there, may glean for it from earth sweet store of holy affections and enjoyments, that shall not “perish in the using ;” love to my eternal Saviour, in Whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at Whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore, and love for the souls He has set round me to be my dearly-prized friends and relatives.

NOONDAY MEDITATION II.

“We have borne the burden and heat of the day.”—
MATT. xx. 12.

“Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, even so longeth my soul after Thee, O Gov.

“Why art thou so vexed, O my soul ? and why art thou so disquieted within me ?”—PSALM xlvi. 1, 14.

“Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give Him thanks, Who is the help of my countenance and my Gov.”—PSALM xlvi. 6.

THE burden and heat of the day ! Who has not felt this to be a most appropriate description ?

Who have not often felt by noon very different to what they were in the freshness of morning? worn and harassed by many troubles, wearied by many cares, “careful and troubled about many things;” and even their very appearance altered; the bright eyes and smiling countenances that came forth from the prayer of the early morning now dimmed, and all their refreshed and animated looks gone. Should not such repair to the oratory, to refresh the minds worn by business, as they retire to their chambers to refresh their outward appearance? Would not a few moments spent there smooth down the ruffled plumes of the spirit, as well as those spent at the mirror serve to restore gloss and beauty to the hair? Would not bathing the soul in prayer and communion be as reviving to its elasticity and composure as the act of bathing the face is to *its* serenity and animation?—and would not the deep confession of the sins already committed draw us nearer to Him by Whom alone we can say, “I will wash my hands in innocence?” Have we not abundant instances of the comfort holy men of old found in the mid-day prayer?

Shall we not, then, try this pleasant and efficacious means of reminding ourselves of our high calling in Christ Jesus, in the mid-course of the day’s business or pleasure? Then we can ask ourselves how far we have sought Him, and are about to seek Him, in the duties and projects of the day; how far we have bowed to His will in every untoward event, and blessed His holy Name, for every blessing and preservation which may have signalized the day.

Then, too, if we received letters from those we love, or heard of their welfare, this will be a good opportunity for intercessions for them. If we cannot always

command time enough for so much, we may sometimes say a few words, enough to lift our hearts to God, and recognize our position, on earth, before Him, below heaven, and above hell !

So shall we, resting like the weary hart beside the still waters, escaping for a few minutes the burden and heat of the day, to return thanks for the alleviations granted us, stand, as it were, under the acacia in the desert, and drink of the living water, and go forth strengthened to meet the rest of the day, with its temptations and its great or little trials, its joys and its consolations, and to say in humble confidence, and meek trust,

“ Why art thou so restless, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Oh, put thy trust in Him, for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God.”—Psalm xlvi. 14, 15.

“ O steadfast be in every need,
For see God's only Son indeed
To be our Saviour given!
O trust in Him, and courage take,
What dark is, He can joyous make,
He loves thee as His life ! ”

Translated from the German.

NOONDAY MEDITATION III.

“ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—GAL. vi. 14.

“ Those glory is in their shame.”—PHIL. iii. 19.

HAPPY are they who can truly say the first, and wretched are they of whom the last is true !

But is it true of any? Are any proud of their shame, *i.e.* of that which is no credit to them? We cannot fail to recollect at once how many we have heard boasting of their open and evident sins,—their skill in gambling, drinking, cheating, and revellings of all kinds.

Besides these, many are vain of that which is not creditable, as flirting, killing time, “setting down” others, carrying out one’s own way, contemning opposition and authority; and, in short, there is hardly any fault of which some possessor will not be proud; and hardly any Christian virtue which those who do not possess it will not affect to despise and avoid.

Of such, it is not difficult to see that their glory is in their shame; but there is more in it than this, and it is quite true and fair to say, that all to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is not their glory come under the condemnation of the text, “whose glory is in their shame.”

Let me, then, in the glow and fervour of the day, while the “unchanging sun,”¹ the “same orb” that has for more centuries than we wot of been ever, ever showing forth his Creator’s glory,² (and typifying that other sun, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world,) is still in his meridian glory; let me retire from the concourse of this present world, and ask myself, Is the expression of St. Paul such as I dare use? Do I glory in nothing but the cross of Christ?

Is the world indeed crucified unto me, and I unto the world, or do I glory in the success I meet with in that world,—in the keenness of my wit, the brightness of my intellect, the fairness of my countenance, the influence of my character? Nay, even in my reputation

¹ First Sunday after Christmas. Keble.

² Nov. 1851, St. Leonard’s-on-Sea.

for seriousness, and my attendance upon holy things, my performance of duties, my renunciation of evil ?

In all these things it is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory, and still less so in any evil habit, or self-indulgence, or success in anything, concerning which my conscience is not clear as to its tendency.

Teach me, O Lord, what is that glorying in Thy cross which was so dear to Thine Apostle ; teach me like all Thine own people, to esteem myself dead indeed unto this world, unto the Prince of the power of this world, and to all its pomps and vanities, but alive unto Thee, risen with Thee, and one with Thee. Even so, O Lord, my God and Saviour, for Thy loving-kindness, and Thy truth's sake. Amen.

NOONDAY MEDITATION IV.

"Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin."—TE DEUM.

THOU that hast brought me thus far on my way this day, forgive me all my sins, so soon this day, alas ! committed, and be Thou with me throughout its course ; that as every hour I live is bringing me nearer to my grave, so may every hour I live fit me more and more for my eternal home. Grant me, O my God, a continual desire to serve and please Thee ; purify every thought and desire of mine heart, and teach me to watch over the words of my lips, until by the free grace given unto me of Thee I be led to live and walk by faith and not by sight, firmly looking to and trusting in Thee, O glorious Lord God, my Saviour. Amen.

NOONDAY MEDITATION V.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say,
Because no man hath hired us."—MATT. xx. 6, 7.

WE, who are bought with a price, and cannot make this plea, since we were pledged in our infancy to a high and holy service, do not however perceive either our calling or our idleness aright, until our Master calleth to us by His Holy Spirit. And even then we often need to ask ourselves, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Why uninterested in the Lord's vineyard? And if not admitted to be of the "company of the preachers," if appointed by age, and sex, and station, but a very modest place in the vineyard, still let us not neglect it, still let us not be content with paying occasional visits to a school, or a poor favourite,—with putting a little of our abundance into the treasury, with giving now and then for the love of God; but let us by prayer, by example, and by energy, in doing what we can and may, labour for Him Who has—because He loved us—given us the spirit to serve and worship Him, and to do good to His children.

It often happens that there is ignorance, sickness, helplessness, or misfortune enough at home, to occupy one fully, out of one's self,—but this is not always the case; and let us beware that we do not too easily suppose it to be so, and continue the excuse from habit, when it no longer really exists.

The labourers to whom this question was addressed were called at the eleventh hour; their day was nearly past, and yet they were permitted to enter in and labour, and share the hire, like unto those who pre-

sumptuously asserted, that they had borne the burden and heat of the day.

I will not put off until the close of my day, or my life, the hearkening to the call; for, unlike these labourers, I received it in my infancy, and have been often warned of it since, and told of my right to love and serve my glorious Master. In the spring-time of my life, ere the noon of my day, let me then pause to consider whether or not I am as yet standing all the day idle,—or whether I am living with a purpose, and that purpose, “to endure unto the end;” for Christ hath said, that such shall be “saved”—saved, because they ever clasp the Hand and the Cross that are held out to save them. O my Saviour, let it be so with me! Teach me to labour diligently in Thy vineyard without pride, vain-glory, or ostentation; and be Thou my one only Master, and Thy Service my delight. Amen. Amen.

Let me be found in my place, when Thou shalt come, looking for Thee, to appear without sin unto salvation. Be Thou with me in my closing hour, and teach me then, as ever, not to fear, but to cling entirely and hopefully unto Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

NOONDAY MEDITATION VI.

“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.”—ACTS xxii. 6.

IT has been often remarked^x how graceful was the thought of making a dial of flowers, the work of

^x Mrs. Hemans.

God's hands, according to the hour of their opening and closing ; but it is far more wonderful and far more beautiful to notice the hours that have been signalized by acts of mercy, still greater works of His hands, recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Few are the hours that have no gracious deed to mark them ; and now at the hour of noon I will fix my eyes upon one of the many recorded as taking place at that hour. I will fix my thoughts upon this striking theme, and I will ask myself, how *I* am serving Him, whom Saul at first so zealously opposed, and then so fervently preached? The great light moves round about him in the brightness of the noonday, and in the zenith of his impetuous career ; even so are we often suddenly arrested in some favourite plan, and made to hear the words, "Peace, be still." "Commune with thine own heart, in thy chamber, and be still." "Hearken what the Lord shall say unto thee." Therefore, when such is my case, teach me, O Lord, rightly to learn the lesson sent me ; and now that Thou permittest me to be up and be doing, grant that all things may work in like manner for my salvation, and that my busiest and most zealous moments may all be occupied in works begun, continued, and ended in Thee. Amen.

NOONDAY MEDITATION VII.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"—I KINGS xix. 9.

TO-DAY I have scarcely one moment for my mid-day retreat, yet I will ask myself the question Elijah was asked by his God, and say unto mine own soul, as an excellent writer¹ assures us she often asked

¹ Mrs. Hannah More.

hers, with compunction, in the midst of worldly scenes, “What doest thou here?” What art thou pursuing in this busy scene? What is the business that keeps thee from thy loved hour of meditation? Nay, it may be good and necessary, and if so, let me pursue it still; it may be trivial and unsatisfactory, yet now unavoidable: and I will lift up my heart in few but earnest words, and say,—“Be with me, O my Lord God, in my walking by the way, in my going out and coming in, in my solitude, and in my companionships. Be Thou about my bed, and about my path, and spy Thou out all my ways. Oh, knit my heart unto Thee, that I may know Thy truth.”

And I will take heed, and carefully avoid, the beginnings of desultory ways early in the day; for five minutes idled away then may defer and postpone everything, and lead to my finding myself at noonday overwhelmed with little thorny obstacles, that prevent my going comfortably to my retirement. But even so I can repeat the short prayer for this day, or the third Collect for Morning Service.

And let me ever, ever ask myself in the midst of hurry, business, cares, pleasures, and provocations, “What doest thou here, my soul?” Art thou taking up thy cross daily, and following thy Lord? Art thou “occupying till He come?” Art thou “watching for His coming?” Art thou “ceasing from evil, and learning to do well?” Art thou “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, rooted in faith, and grounded in charity?” —“looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,” and ready to say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Amen.

Prayer

UPON CONCLUDING THIS WORK.

O THOU in Whom alone our works can be hal-
lowed, and by Whom alone they can do good ;
send down Thy blessing upon this little message to
the young ones of Thy Church. Let it lead them to
love, and praise, and magnify Thy glorious Name,
evermore loving more and more the words of Thy
servant David, and adoring Thee as long as they live
on earth ; drawing nearer day by day to Thy kingdom,
until Thou receive them there for ever, for Jesus
Christ's sake. Amen.

